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Helen Johnson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Johnson

Ofsted remote visit to Birkenhead Park School

Following my remote visit with David Selby, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 2 December 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the visit's findings. Thank you for the time you made available to discuss your actions since September 2020, when the government expected all schools to open fully to all pupils.

This visit was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for visiting schools while routine inspections are temporarily suspended. Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, we made this visit remotely to reduce pressure on the school.

Ofsted's visits to schools during the autumn term are not inspections. We are not giving graded judgements. We did not undertake the usual range of inspection activities and were unable to check other sources of evidence, such as visits to lessons or looking at pupils' work. The content of this letter gives an overview of our discussions about what has happened in your school this term.

During the visit, we spoke with you, your deputy headteacher and three assistant headteachers, one of whom is also the designated safeguarding lead and special educational needs coordinator. We did not speak to pupils.

Context

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's education system is managing the return to full

education for pupils, following an extended break in formal schooling due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In undertaking this focused work, HMI are visiting a broad range of schools. HMI will visit a sample of:

- approximately 1,200 schools across all Ofsted grades (outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate)
- maintained schools, academies and free schools, special schools and centres of alternative provision, including those in cities, and coastal, town or rural communities.

The information from this visit will feed into Ofsted's national reporting so that the insights can be shared with the government and the education sector. We did not find any significant concerns during the visit. In such a case, an inspection report would be published on our website and available to parents and carers.

We did not consider your response to COVID-19 during the spring and summer terms 2020, when the school was not open to all pupils.

From this visit, inspectors noted that:

- Since September, just under half of the pupils at the school have studied from home for a short period of time.
- You said that pupils in Years 7 to 11 are studying all of the subjects in their usual curriculum. However, you explained that in some subjects, such as English, teachers are adjusting the order in which they deliver the curriculum content. You intend to return to all of your usual curriculum plans by September 2021.
- You told us that teachers use a combination of strategies in their everyday lessons to assess what pupils know and can do. They are using this information to establish pupils' new starting points.
- You explained that some pupils in Year 7 are not reading as well as they should at this time of year. You have also noticed that in mathematics, some pupils are less proficient with their multiplication skills and in their use of fractions. To address this, teachers are providing additional support with reading and numeracy to help those pupils catch up.
- Currently, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are following all of their GCSE and vocational examination subjects. You said that pupils in Year 11 have access to a programme of careers education. For example, visitors from an external organisation have carried out 'careers interviews' with pupils.
- You shared your approach to remote education. You explained that teachers deliver 'live' lessons to pupils while also teaching a class in school.

- You told us about the challenges that teachers face in delivering some subjects online, such as physical education. You described how teachers across several subject areas have found ways to deliver practical activities remotely. For example, in food technology, pupils access pre-recorded demonstrations of each step involved in making a food product.

Thank you again for contributing to this important national work. The views and experiences you have shared will help to inform future policy.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of the BePART Educational Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wirral. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alyson Middlemass
Her Majesty's Inspector