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Andrew Galbraith
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Dear Mr Galbraith

Ofsted visit to Highfield Leadership Academy

Following my visit with Rachel Goodwin, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 29 September 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.

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 to you, other senior leaders (including the senior leader responsible for safeguarding), and other staff involved in safeguarding. We did not speak to pupils because of the protective measures in place.

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 (coronavirus) 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:

- The school opened to all pupils on 2 September 2020. Most pupils returned full time. Those pupils working in the school's support centre, the Appleby Centre, returned in small groups at different times. All these pupils were expected to attend fully from 21 September 2020.
- Pupils' attendance so far this term is above their attendance at a similar stage in previous years.
- All pupils are studying their usual range of subjects. You have changed the order of some topics in a few subjects. For example, pupils in Year 7 are practising singing later in the year. You expect that teaching of the curriculum will be fully back to normal by the summer term in 2021.
- Your teachers have checked on pupils' work since March to identify whether pupils are missing things they should know. Your teachers use quizzes and tests in class to make sure that pupils are learning any missing knowledge.
- You have increased the focus on reading and basic mathematical skills in Years 7 and 8. You have changed the way you are teaching creative subjects, such as art and drama, in Year 9.
- Pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 are following their GCSE and other examination courses as normal.
- You have designed a programme of remote learning that closely matches the work taught in school in all subjects. You are already using this so that pupils who are absent can keep up with their work. If groups of pupils must be away from school, you intend for them to work on their normal timetable but to switch to the remote learning.

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 board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Blackpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector