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30 October 2020

Judith Lovelock  
Headteacher  
Almond Hill Junior School  
Almonds Lane  
Stevenage  
Hertfordshire  
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Dear Mrs Lovelock

### **Ofsted visit to Almond Hill Junior School**

Following my visit with Isabel Davis, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 8 October 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 in your role as headteacher and in your role as the designated safeguarding lead. We also spoke to the deputy headteacher and to the special educational needs leader. 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 fully to all pupils on 3 September 2020. As part of their induction, pupils joining the school in Year 3 had a later start and earlier finish time for their first two days of school. This was to give staff time to help pupils and parents adjust to the new routines in place.
- Attendance is broadly in line with the normal attendance for this time of year.
- Pupils are studying their usual range of subjects. Leaders have changed the order in which some content is covered while teachers adapt their teaching. Where this is the case, staff plan to teach the same content, but later in the year.
- There is a strong focus on developing reading and making sure that pupils' phonics knowledge is secure. Curriculum plans for writing have been revised so that teachers can plan lessons that take account of pupils' different starting points.
- In mathematics, teachers are checking what pupils can remember from what they have learned before and identifying where pupils need more practice. Teachers are focusing on ensuring that pupils' core mathematical knowledge, such as place value and calculation strategies, are secure.
- Pupils who are unable to attend school because they are self-isolating can access learning via the school website or through learning packs that are

delivered to pupils' homes. Leaders are exploring ways in which teachers can best deliver the curriculum remotely should this be needed.

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 governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Katherine Douglas  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**