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Christine Peden
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Dear Mrs Peden

Ofsted visit to Pear Tree Mead Academy

Following my visit with Wendy Varney, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 6 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 and the senior leadership team, including the senior leader responsible for safeguarding and the special educational needs coordinator designated safeguarding lead. 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. There are no pupils following part-time timetables.
- Attendance since the start of term is similar to what it would usually be at this time of year. You shared expectations regarding attendance with parents before term began. Staff, including the family support team and attendance officer, continue to work with pupils and their families to support regular attendance.
- You told us that you have decided to concentrate this term on pupils' learning in English, mathematics and science and on helping pupils settle back into school. Pupils are currently not learning geography, history, art, computing, music and French. You plan to reintroduce teaching in all subjects over the coming months and hope to return to your usual curriculum by late spring 2021.
- We heard how teachers have carried out assessments to find out where pupils currently are in their reading. You told us that teachers are focusing even more than previously on helping pupils, including children in early years, to develop their reading and phonics skills. Adults are providing extra help for those pupils who need it to catch up with their reading skills.
- In mathematics, your checks on pupils' learning have resulted in a focus on pupils' basic number skills, including arithmetic and multiplication tables.

- In science, you told us that the curriculum leader has identified important knowledge that was not taught during the period when the school was only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions. The science curriculum has been reordered and adapted to include this missed knowledge. In personal, social and health education, religious education and physical education, we heard how content has been selected to focus on pupils' social, emotional and physical well-being during the early part of the school year.
- You have plans in place to provide remote learning in the future, should this be needed. Teachers will provide activities across the full range of subjects using your existing learning platform and school website. These will include using lessons from an academy's online resources to support pupils' 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, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Wilson
Her Majesty's Inspector