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6 November 2020

Catherine Grattan  
Headteacher  
Higham Primary School  
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Higham  
Kent  
ME3 7JL

Dear Mrs Grattan

### **Ofsted visit to Higham Primary School**

Following my visit with Harry Ingham, 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, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), the senior leader and the chair of governors. 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:**

- You opened the school to pupils in Years 1 to 6 on 3 September 2020, when they were expected to attend full time. Reception Year children started on 9 September 2020, initially part time. By 28 September 2020, they were also expected to attend full time.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly the same as this time last year. You continue to reinforce your expectations to parents via the school newsletter.
- With the exception of modern foreign languages in Years 3 to 6, pupils are studying all of the subjects that they usually would. You plan to introduce a new modern foreign languages curriculum by summer 2021.
- For some subjects, you have made some temporary alterations to what pupils are currently being taught. For example, teachers have changed some of the instruments that pupils would normally be using in music. You plan to restore the usual elements in these subjects as soon as possible.
- Teachers have given over more time to reading every day. Since returning in September, teachers have carried out checks on all pupils' reading. They have focused on the teaching of phonics in Reception Year and Years 1 and 2. Teachers have identified pupils who need extra support with their reading.
- In mathematics, teachers have prioritised teaching place value. Teachers' initial checks show that older pupils are less confident at problem solving. Formal assessments are due to take place shortly.
- You have found that pupils have struggled getting back to writing at length. Pupils' handwriting and presentation have also dipped. Teachers have identified additional opportunities across a range of other subjects for pupils to further practise their writing.

- Currently, you are providing home learning packs to the small number of pupils who are unable to attend because of illness. As far as possible, this mirrors what the rest of the class are learning. You also have plans in place to deliver subjects remotely for all year groups, should it be needed. These plans include online lessons set by teachers for pupils to use.

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 Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Green  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**