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Neal Holder
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Holder

Ofsted visit to Farringdon Community Academy

Following my visit with Chris Smith, 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, the deputy headteachers, the assistant headteacher, the deputy designated safeguarding lead and the attendance officer. 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 pupils in Year 7 on 3 September 2020. Other year groups attended gradually over the first week. All pupils were expected to attend full time from 11 September 2020.
- The level of attendance, so far this term, is slightly below that seen normally at this time of year. You explained that some pupils are not in school because their parents are worried about their health. You have shared your expectations for attendance with parents and this has strengthened the communication between home and school. Attendance has improved as a result.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are being taught their usual subjects. You have a range of adaptations in place in subjects such as science and art. In art, for example, there are more opportunities for pupils to focus on drawing and analysis skills linked to topics of interest to them.
- Leaders explained that pupils in Years 10 and 11 are continuing to study their subject choices. You have changed the teaching timetable and are offering more time to teach English, mathematics and science. You have altered the sequence of learning in some subjects. For example, in BTEC sport you are focusing on theory only this term.
- Teachers have been asked to carry out a range of informal assessments, in all subjects, to establish what pupils know and remember. You told us that teachers have used this information to adapt planning and the sequence of learning in some subjects. You have also introduced additional learning sessions at the start and end of the school day for pupils in Year 11, to

address any gaps or missed learning that result from the COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions.

- Leaders told us they have set up digital resources, as part of the remote-learning provision, in case the school closes to all or groups of pupils again. Remote learning will be a combination of live teaching, recorded lessons and personal lesson study.

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

Yours sincerely

Gill Wild
Her Majesty's Inspector