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Mr Christopher Mulqueen
Principal
Aspire Academy
351 Annandale Road
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Dear Mr Mulqueen

Ofsted visit to Aspire Academy

Following my visit with Jean Watt, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 13 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 the senior leadership team and 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 re-opened to all pupils on 9 September 2020.
- Pupils' attendance since the start of this term has been slightly lower than that for the same period last year. You are providing support for pupils who are not attending and staff frequently contact these pupils' families.
- Leaders explained to us that pupils are studying their usual range of subjects. They told us that they have made some changes to the content delivered within subjects. For example, changes have been made to the content of hairdressing and beauty courses.
- As principal of an alternative provision academy, you routinely use a suite of assessments to establish pupils' starting points and identify gaps. This year, assessments show that pupils' gaps in reading and writing are much wider than usual because they have lost learning time.
- Across all subjects and year groups, pupils are reading additional subject-related material in lessons to close gaps in reading and vocabulary.
- In Years 7 to 9, pupils receive additional support in small groups to close literacy gaps. This support is focused on developing pupils' confidence in reading and writing, as well as their vocabulary and spoken language knowledge. Where necessary, some pupils receive extra help to close gaps in their phonics knowledge.
- You are developing the school's capacity to deliver learning remotely. You have purchased a new computer programme to support online 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 Kingston-upon-Hull. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector