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Trevor Lawn
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Dear Mr Lawn

Ofsted visit to Alec Hunter Academy

Following my visit with Liz 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 and your team of senior leaders, one of whom is your designated safeguarding lead, your coordinator of special educational needs and/or disabilities, and a representative of the human resources team. We also met briefly with the chief executive of the Saffron Educational Trust. 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 reopened to all pupils on 8 September 2020. Almost all pupils are back in school full time.
- Attendance in the first four weeks of term is slightly lower than what it was this time last year. Leaders are working with the parents of pupils who remain absent to encourage them back into school.
- Leaders have implemented revised plans to develop the curriculum. They expect that all pupils will follow this revised curriculum and all enrichment activities by the summer term 2021.
- In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils continue to study the usual range of subjects. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow the core curriculum as well as the subjects they have chosen to study.
- Tests carried out to assess pupils' abilities and interests on entry into Year 7 have provided staff with some information to inform their planning of learning. Further assessments in all subjects will be carried out during lessons throughout this term, to provide staff with an overview of how well all pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are doing.
- Pupils in Year 11 will sit mock examinations in all subjects before October 2020 half term. Year 10 pupils will also sit mock examinations towards the end of this term. Staff intend to use the information they gain from these assessments to inform their planning.

- Senior and middle leaders are working together to develop new approaches to remote learning. Training for staff and pupils is under way to ensure that the curriculum can be delivered digitally should it 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 chief executive officer of the Saffron Educational Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector