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16 November 2020

Gordon Farquhar  
Headteacher  
King James Academy Royston  
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Royston  
Hertfordshire  
SG8 7JH

Dear Mr Farquhar

### **Ofsted visit to King James Academy Royston**

Following my visit with Christine Dick, 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, members of the senior leadership team, the designated safeguarding lead and leaders from the 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:**

- You opened the school to all pupils on 9 September 2020. Pupils in Years 5 to 11 attend full time. Students in the sixth form are currently learning from home. They are using the school's online provision.
- Attendance is slightly below what you expect for this time of the year. You have reminded parents that pupils must attend school. You are working with parents to encourage them to send their children to school. Staff work with external agencies to support pupils who find it difficult to attend school regularly.
- Pupils are studying all the usual range of subjects. You and your leaders are changing the way you use space in the school's buildings, to enable teaching and learning in safety.
- Staff have been checking what pupils know and understand. Staff are using this information to support any pupils who need to catch up.
- In Years 5 and 6, leaders have changed the way staff teach mathematics, to help pupils remember what they learned last academic year.
- Leaders have introduced new approaches to the teaching of reading and have prioritised the teaching of grammar, spelling and punctuation across the curriculum for Years 5 and 6.
- In Years 7 to 9, leaders have changed the books pupils read in English to help them practise skills taught in the summer term of 2020. Leaders have also provided extra lessons in mathematics to help pupils catch up.

- You plan to review the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 later this term to determine if changes will be needed.
- In the sixth form, you have one group of students studying the performing arts. Staff have changed aspects of the curriculum for these students. For example, the unit regarding musical theatre has been adapted.
- You have surveyed parents to find out how the school can help them support pupils at home, including when pupils are unable to attend school due to COVID-19 restrictions. You have also asked parents how staff can improve the school's approach to remote education.

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 chief executive officer of the Diamond Learning Partnership Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Al Mistrano  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**