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17 November 2020

Miss Gemma Down  
Principal  
Croft Academy  
Croft Street  
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West Midlands  
WS2 8JE

Dear Miss Down

### **Ofsted remote visit to Croft Academy**

Following my remote visit with Claire Jones, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 5 November 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. Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, we made this visit remotely to reduce pressure on the school.

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 executive principal, the vice-principal, the senior leadership team and other staff with responsibility for curriculum subjects, safeguarding and attendance. We did not speak to pupils.

## **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 2 September 2020. Most Reception children started school on that day and more joined on 4 September. This year's Nursery children started from 7 September and, as normal, they attend part time. All pupils from Reception through to Year 6 are expected to attend full time.
- Overall attendance so far this term is below what you would normally expect. At the time of this remote visit there were no pupils or families self-isolating at home because of COVID-19. You and your staff keep in regular touch with families through daily contact online, by telephone or through home visits to encourage all pupils to attend school.
- Pupils are studying most of their usual subjects. Physical education, art and music have been adapted to make sure that pupils and staff comply with social distancing and hygiene procedures. Swimming lessons have been temporarily suspended because of pool closures. You and your staff, together with the Elliot Foundation Academies Trust, have devised a recovery plan to review what is needed to help pupils catch up on what they missed during the previous school closure.

- Your teachers and support staff have noticed that pupils in Year 1 to Year 3 have fallen behind in their phonic knowledge. Pupils across the school have also slipped in some areas of reading, writing and mathematics. Your staff are providing additional time for pupils to read and write, and extra afternoon phonics sessions take place for pupils in Years 1 and 2. In mathematics, teachers have planned an extra focus on fractions because they noticed that pupils have missed or forgotten some aspects of this mathematical knowledge.
- In subjects such as geography and history, teachers told us that they have linked themes and adapted topics to help pupils remember what they have learned before. For example, after studying the evacuation during World War II, pupils in Year 2 will move on to a topic about cities and the countryside.
- You and your staff have prepared home-learning tasks for pupils. Home-learning resources are a combination of paper-based work, which can be collected by families, and online resources using your classroom home-learning website. You say that parents can get support to help manage their children's learning at home should this be required in case of any future lockdown.

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 chief executive officer of the Elliot Foundation Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Walsall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**