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Grainne McLaughlin
Principal
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Dear Ms McLaughlin

Ofsted remote visit to The Gateway Academy

Following my remote visit with Maureen Su, 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 (coronavirus) 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 and other leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding pupils. 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 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 3 September 2020. All pupils are expected to attend full time.
- Current rates of attendance are in line with normal attendance rates at the school for this time of year.
- You had planned to introduce changes to personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) in September 2020. You decided not to deliver this provision during tutor times as you originally intended. The PSHE curriculum is now delivered as a timetabled lesson.
- Pupils are studying the full range of subjects they normally study. Some subjects have had a slight reduction in time allocation. More time is allocated to your enhanced PSHE programme. There are some changes to the timings of the school day.
- The way you teach aspects of the curriculum has changed, for example, science is often taught with demonstrations, rather than by pupils undertaking practical tasks. You will review your methods of delivery over this academic year.
- Teachers are identifying gaps in pupils' understanding through ongoing assessment, some of which is completed online. Teachers adapt what they teach based on what they find out.
- Where pupils need additional support, you intend to use your established systems for providing this, such as the 'additional learning periods'. You have

decided to introduce a Saturday school this term. This is earlier in the academic year than normal.

- You delayed teaching some mathematics content to pupils in Year 7, and English content in Years 7 and 8, in order to deliver a transition programme. This programme was to help identify gaps in pupils' knowledge, and to cover work they might have missed during the partial closure of schools. You are now moving forward with your normal programmes for mathematics and English, with content taught in the usual order.
- As in other year groups, you have committed to maintaining the breadth and depth of study in Year 11, regardless of any potential changes to examination requirements this academic year. You feel this will benefit pupils in their future lives.
- You have plans in place to deliver education remotely in the future, should one or more year groups not be able to attend school due to COVID-19. This would consist of a mixture of teaching through video conferencing and work set online. You intend that the content would match your normal curriculum.

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 Gateway Learning Community multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Thurrock. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Hemmings
Her Majesty's Inspector