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23 November 2020

Amanda Fewkes  
Headteacher  
The Fen Rivers Academy  
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Dear Mrs Fewkes

### **Ofsted remote visit to The Fen Rivers Academy**

Following my remote visit with John Randall, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 10 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, the senior leadership team and the senior leader 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:**

- At this special school, some pupils attended school on a rota system for the first two weeks of the autumn term, to support their return to on-site education. Thirteen out of 36 pupils have had to work from home for a period of time since the start of term, while they self-isolate and await test results. No pupils were self-isolating at the time of the visit.
- Staff delivered an adapted curriculum for the first four weeks of term, focusing on pupils' emotional health and well-being.
- While all pupils are studying their usual range of subjects, there have been adaptations to the wider curriculum, such as in physical education and music. Pupils are not studying cookery or taking part in any educational visits. Leaders plan for pupils to return to their usual curriculum by summer 2021.
- You have changed the teaching of phonics to help pupils cover any learning they have missed. You are using the COVID-19 catch-up funding to provide pupils with extra support to catch up with reading and writing.
- Teachers have recognised that pupils require additional practice in some mathematical concepts before moving on to more challenging work. Teachers are planning to have an increased focus on pupils' understanding of number.
- In Year 7, teachers have identified that pupils need extra support with their written and verbal descriptions.

- Teachers are using a variety of assessments in different subjects to check what knowledge pupils can remember from their prior learning. They plan to use this information to revise their curriculum plans.
- Leaders are continuing to develop ways of delivering the curriculum to any pupil who is unable to attend school because of COVID-19. Leaders monitor pupils' access and engagement with the work provided on the online system, and with the packs of work distributed.

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 Catch22 multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**