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Sue Hamilton
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Dear Mrs Hamilton

Ofsted remote visit to Washington Academy

Following my remote visit with Gill Wild, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 10 November, 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 with you and members of your senior leadership team, including the safeguarding leader. We spoke with four subject leaders. We also spoke with the trust's chief executive officer and one of the trust's directors of education. 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 the time of our visit, pupils in one Year 9 'bubble' were isolating at home. Around a sixth of pupils have had to work from home since the school opened to all pupils on 4 September.
- You said that all pupils are studying their usual subjects, but you explained that you have made some changes to subject content. You told us that, with the trust's support, you have planned a 'recovery curriculum'. You plan to return to your usual curriculum by summer 2021.
- You have used assessment to check on pupils' starting points since the school opened at the start of term. For Years 10 and 11, subject leaders have focused on teaching what pupils need to know, and be able to do, for the final examinations.
- For pupils in Years 8 and 9, you have planned how to support them in getting back up to speed with the learning they missed during the period when schools were only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions. For example, you described how you have adapted the order and content of units in all subjects. For Year 7 pupils, you have planned how to cover the work that the pupils would have been doing towards the end of Year 6.

- You talked us through what you have been doing to provide remote education for pupils who are isolating. You explained how you have used the equipment provided by the Department for Education to ensure that all pupils who need a computer have one they can use at home.
- Currently, you provide all year groups with digitally based remote work which is very similar to what they would have been doing at school. You said that some teachers are teaching 'live' lessons, and that increasing the number of these is your main priority for 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 and the chief executive officer of the Consilium multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sunderland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Shaw
Her Majesty's Inspector