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Matt Perry
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Perry

Ofsted remote visit to The Halifax Academy

Following my remote visit with Marcus Newby, 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 designated safeguarding leaders for primary and secondary, the primary deputy headteacher and the secondary deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher for behaviour and safety, and the head of primary. 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:

- In the primary phase, around half of pupils have had to work from home at some point since the start of term because they have had to self-isolate. In the secondary phase, just under half of pupils have had to work from home at some point since September 2020.
- All pupils are studying the full range of subjects that make up the school's usual curriculum. You explained that you have made some changes to your curriculum plans. For instance, Year 4 pupils are learning about volcanoes and rocks because they missed this subject content during the summer term.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to study their chosen examination subjects.
- Teachers have undertaken checks on pupils' reading. You explained that these checks show that some pupils in Year 2 have gaps in their phonics knowledge. Staff are providing additional support for these pupils in small groups.
- In mathematics, in the primary phase, teachers are carrying out assessments of pupils' new starting points. You told us that you have adapted your curriculum plans to address subject content that pupils have missed when they were not in school.

- Checks on primary-aged pupils' knowledge and understanding in subjects from the wider curriculum, such as music, will be carried out later in the term.
- In Years 8 to 11, checks on pupils' new starting points in science have revealed that there are gaps in some pupils' knowledge. You told us that those pupils who need help to catch up will be given extra support.
- You are able to deliver education remotely, if required. You explained that the remote curriculum for primary-aged pupils focuses on reading, writing and mathematics. The planned remote education for secondary-aged pupils includes all subject areas.

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

Yours sincerely

Michele Costello
Her Majesty's Inspector