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Paula Rudd
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Rudd

Ofsted remote visit to Water Mill Primary School

Following my remote visit with Charalambos Loizou, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 17 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 deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher responsible for safeguarding. 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:

- Just over one quarter of pupils have had to work from home since the start of term.
- All pupils are studying their usual range of subjects. You have adjusted the curriculum so that pupils have more time in English and mathematics. Your aim is to return to your usual curriculum by summer term 2021.
- In subjects such as geography and French, teachers have identified core knowledge that was missed during the summer term. You have adapted plans to address these gaps.
- Teachers have carried out checks in reading, writing and mathematics to see what pupils can remember. You have noticed that the biggest gaps are in writing. Teachers' assessments show that pupils need more help to improve their grammar, punctuation and structure.
- In mathematics, teachers have identified areas where pupils require additional support. Teachers are addressing this by spending more time on number and times tables. You said that teachers are addressing other gaps in pupils' knowledge by providing opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing in other subjects, such as history.
- Reading remains a priority for the school. You have noticed a slight drop in older pupils' inference skills. For younger children, you have identified gaps in their use of sounds. You told us that you have increased the number of

phonics sessions each day and have a programme of interventions to help close the gaps pupils have in their learning.

- You have a system of remote education in place for individual pupils who are isolating or whole-class 'bubbles' working from home. Your approach combines both paper-based work-packs and access to online websites. Leaders said that their remote education closely aligns to their current 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 governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Howes
Her Majesty's Inspector