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1 December 2020

Nick Hutchings  
Headteacher  
Hamilton Primary School  
Constantine Road  
Colchester  
Essex  
CO3 3GB

Dear Mr Hutchings

### **Ofsted remote visit to Hamilton Primary School**

Following my remote visit with Hannah Stoten, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 11 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 yourself and the deputy headteacher. 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 the visit, the Year 1, 2 and 3 'bubbles' were self-isolating. A few pupils from other year groups were also self-isolating. Since the start of term, just under half of the pupils have had to work from home.
- Pupils are studying their normal range of subjects. Leaders aim to return to the usual planned curriculum by the summer term 2021.
- At the beginning of the autumn term, teachers checked pupils' starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders found that pupils had not fallen far behind in these subjects during the time they were not in school.
- Leaders have increased the range of reading books to give more opportunities for pupils to read. In Year 3, teachers have increased the time they spend on phonics, to give additional support to pupils.
- In mathematics, teachers are revisiting areas to give prompts to pupils to make sure they remember what they learned previously before moving on to new learning.
- Teachers are changing the order some subjects are taught in. Some practical tasks are being done differently. In science, teachers are demonstrating practical experiments alongside pupils.

- Leaders have a remote learning offer in place and pupils are currently accessing it. For each subject, teachers are planning for pupils to learn the same content at home as they do at school. If pupils do not have access to computers, paper-based learning packs are sent home.

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 Essex County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Fyfe Johnston  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**