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3 December 2020

Louise Brammer  
Executive Principal  
Maple Court Academy  
Beverley Drive  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST2 0QD

Dear Mrs Brammer

### **Ofsted remote visit to Maple Court Academy**

Following my remote visit with Christopher Stevens, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 24 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 head of academy and a range of leaders, including the senior leader 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:**

- Two Reception classes and a Year 5 class 'bubble' were isolating at the time of the visit. In addition to these, approximately a quarter of the pupils have had to work from home at some point, because of COVID-19, since September.
- Pupils are not currently studying computing and modern foreign languages, but you plan that they will be doing so by the start of next term. You have taken this decision so that teachers can spend more time on other subjects, such as reading. Your intention is for pupils to return to their usual curriculum by the start of the summer term 2021.
- Phonics checks have shown that pupils have gaps in their phonic knowledge, particularly in Year 2. In this year group, teachers have grouped pupils so that they can be taught the sounds they do not know. In addition, teachers' checks have shown that pupils' reading comprehension requires extra work. Consequently, you have increased the number of sessions where pupils read with adults.
- In mathematics, teachers' checks have shown that pupils have gaps in their knowledge in most areas, including number and place-value work. Teachers are including the missed mathematical content from the summer term in the topics they are currently teaching.
- In the wider curriculum, you told us that you are prioritising specific subjects, such as physical education and personal, social, health and economic education. In other subjects, such as history and geography, teachers are scaling back curriculum content to focus on what they consider to be the most important parts of these subjects. You told us that this is a temporary measure until the end of the spring term 2021.

- Currently, you are providing remote education for three class bubbles and some individual pupils who are self-isolating. You use two online learning tools to set work for most of these pupils. You told us that some of your pupils do not have suitable devices, or an internet connection in their homes. You are working with these families to overcome this.

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 local governing body, the chief executive officer of the Alpha Academies multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Stoke-on-Trent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Wayne Simner  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**