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11 December 2020

Helen Emmett  
Headteacher  
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East Sussex  
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Dear Miss Emmett

### **Ofsted remote visit to Heron Park Primary Academy**

Following my remote visit to your school on 12 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 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. I did not undertake the usual range of inspection activities and was 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, I spoke to you, the senior leadership team, including the senior leader responsible for safeguarding, and several trust leaders, including the chief executive officer. I 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 (coronavirus) 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. I 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.

I 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, the inspectors noted that:**

- Approximately a sixth of your pupils have not been in school at some point this term because of COVID-19. This has been mostly due to your Year 5 'bubble' having to self-isolate at home for 14 days in September 2020. There have also been some pupils from other year groups having to stay at home while awaiting test results.
- Pupils are studying the usual range of subjects. Teachers have made some changes to content. So, for instance, in music there has been a focus on playing instruments rather than singing since September 2020.
- Teachers checked on pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills and understanding at the start of the term. They found that the teaching of reading needed to be a priority across the school, especially to help younger pupils to rebuild their phonics skills. For the older year groups, teachers are focusing on developing pupils' understanding as well as increasing how much they read.
- In mathematics, teachers have found that pupils' grasp of place value is not as strong as they would normally expect it to be. They are reinforcing this knowledge through pupils' mathematics learning this term.
- Teachers are checking on any lost learning in other subjects as they work through the normal curriculum with pupils. They are addressing any gaps as and when they find them.

- Those pupils who are absent from school for any reason are given access to learning activities online. For those pupils who do not have access to the internet, the school provides hard copies of all the work set. When the Year 5 bubble worked from home earlier this term, they were therefore able to follow their normal curriculum using the resources which the school provided.

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 Aurora Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Yasmin Maskatiya  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**