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Katy Wright
Executive principal
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Dear Mrs Wright

Ofsted remote visit to Aughton Junior Academy

Following my remote visit with Gill Wild, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 25 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 vice-principal and the inclusion manager. 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:

- Pupils are grouped into class 'bubbles'. So far this term, no bubbles have been sent home due to COVID-19. You told us that, since school resumed in September, a small number of pupils have had to work from home because they were self-isolating.
- Leaders plan to return fully to the usual curriculum by Easter 2021. You explained that pupils are studying all the normal subjects but that you have made some adaptations to what is being taught. In history and physical education, you told us that you are focusing more on pupils' acquisition of skills, with more opportunities for pupils to repeat and practise what they are taught.
- Teachers have checked pupils' starting points. These checks have identified that some pupils have slipped back in their mental mathematical skills. In English, you explained that pupils' early reading skills are closer to where you would expect them to be, but some pupils are lacking the stamina to write at length.

- In mathematics, teachers are focusing more on mental mathematics, times tables and telling the time. You explained that teachers are also revisiting each topic more frequently, to help pupils to remember more.
- Leaders have increased the number of phonics sessions each day. You explained that you have added a third 'make-up' session for pupils who have gaps in their knowledge. You also explained that you are creating vocabulary displays in every classroom and have introduced new texts that include more varied vocabulary.
- In other subjects, you told us that you are teaching the planned curriculum content in the usual sequence. You explained that almost all the usual content is being taught, although some practical science work and trips out of school to places of interest are not taking place.
- Leaders are providing remote learning for the few pupils who are self-isolating. You explained that you expect pupils to follow the same timetable at home as they would in school. You told us that pupils can access assignments and presentations online that cover the same content their peers are learning in class.
- You have plans in place to provide remote learning should you need to send home a class bubble. You told us that teachers will provide online learning in all subjects, including teaching phonics sessions remotely.

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 Aston Community Education Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Rotherham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector