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Matt O'Grady
Headteacher
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Dear Mr O'Grady

Ofsted visit to West Horndon Primary School

Following my visit with Andrew Hemmings, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 8 December 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.

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 inclusion manager and the subject leader for English. We did not speak to pupils because of the protective measures in place.

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. 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:

- A small number of pupils have had to learn from home since the start of the autumn term. There were no 'bubbles' of pupils isolating at the time of the visit.
- Pupils are studying the usual subjects they normally would. Teachers are adapting how they teach some of the practical activities in subjects such as music and design and technology.
- The school has a resource base for pupils with speech, language and communication needs. These pupils would normally have some lessons in the base and some lessons with their peers in the main school. Currently, these pupils are being taught full time in the base.
- Leaders are prioritising pupils' well-being. Pupils are undertaking more activities than previously to build confidence and resilience. Teachers are providing more opportunities for pupils to learn outside.
- Teachers have assessed pupils' new starting points in reading, including phonics, writing and mathematics. Younger pupils are receiving extra phonics lessons each day to help them catch up. Older pupils are having more opportunities to practise their comprehension skills.
- Teachers are focusing more on pupils' handwriting. This is because pupils' written presentation has regressed. Some pupils did not write regularly during the period of partial closure in the summer term.

- In mathematics, older pupils are struggling more than they normally would with word problems. All pupils in Years 5 and 6 have access to online mathematics tutoring. This is in addition to their normal mathematics lessons.
- Leaders have put in place an online offer should pupils need to learn from home. Pupils follow a timetable of activities that link to the usual curriculum. Younger pupils can watch recorded sessions with their teacher and older pupils can take part in 'live' lessons.

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. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Liz Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector