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James Bird
Head of School
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Dear Mr Bird

Ofsted visit to Grestone Academy

Following my visit with Mark Sims, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 9 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 and the senior leader responsible for safeguarding. 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:

- Approximately one quarter of pupils have had to self-isolate and learn from home at some point since the start of term.
- Pupils are studying their usual range of subjects. You have adjusted your curriculum so that pupils have more time in reading, writing and mathematics. Your aim is to return to your usual curriculum by summer term 2021.
- Teachers have carried out checks in reading, writing and mathematics at the start of term to see what pupils can remember. You have used this information to help shape your curriculum for this academic year.
- In reading, teachers have identified gaps in younger pupils' phonic knowledge. In older year groups, you have noticed that pupils need more time to recall and use their inference skills. You told us that you have put in place an intervention programme to support those pupils who are furthest behind.
- In writing, teachers have noticed that pupils have gaps in their use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. You told us that you are using other subjects such as history and geography to provide further opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills.
- Your assessments in mathematics indicate that pupils have gaps in their knowledge of times tables and place value. Teachers are using an online programme to help provide extra support to pupils in these areas.

- In the wider curriculum, you have placed additional emphasis on personal, social and health education and physical education. This is because you want to prioritise pupils' mental well-being and ensure that they are physically active.
- You have a system in place for remote education. Individual pupils who are self-isolating can access work packs that are uploaded to a website. Where whole-class 'bubbles' are sent home, teachers deliver live lessons as well as directing pupils to online resources. You explained how remote education closely aligns to the curriculum taught in school.

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, the chief executive officers of the Hamstead Hall multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Howes
Her Majesty's Inspector