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Lucy Griffiths
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Griffiths

Ofsted remote visit to South Hetton Primary School

Following my remote visit with Fiona Manuel, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 1 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. 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 deputy headteacher, the mathematics leader and the computing leader. 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:

- At the time of our visit there were no 'bubbles' of pupils self-isolating. You explained that you have not yet had to isolate a bubble of pupils. Since September 2020, a small number of pupils have had to work from home for a few days.
- Pupils are studying all subjects that make up the school's usual curriculum. However, you explained that you are making changes to the content of some subjects. In physical education (PE), for example, you told us that pupils are not swimming at present.
- You tested pupils' mathematical understanding at the start of the year. These tests show that pupils could not remember basic number facts, so you have increased the amount of time spent teaching these by 15 minutes each day. You told us that you have also changed the structure of your lessons to include a focus on pupils' mental calculation strategies.
- Reading tests show pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 have forgotten some of their phonic knowledge. In Year 3 to Year 6, you told us that spelling rules have been forgotten and that this is now a common difficulty for pupils. You have purchased a digital spelling programme to support pupils with this. You have also increased the number of adults you have available to help pupils with their reading and phonics.
- In subjects such as computing, you are using your knowledge of the pupils to decide what to teach next. You told us that you have made changes to the order in which you teach the units of work to take account of learning that has

been lost in the summer term. For example, all pupils are being taught how to code, along with a focus on online safety this term.

- You provide remote education through a mix of online and paper-based materials. You told us that this is because access to the internet can be a problem for some pupils. You have not yet had to provide remote education for a bubble of pupils, but you have plans in place to do so if required.
- You explained that you have tried to align the work pupils do at home with the lessons in school. However, in some curriculum areas, such as phonics and PE, this is not always possible.

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 chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Tudhoe Learning Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Durham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector