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6 January 2021

Alison Connop  
Headteacher  
Grove Vale Primary School  
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Great Barr  
Birmingham  
B43 6AL

Dear Mrs Connop

### **Ofsted visit to Grove Vale Primary School**

Following my visit with Jonathan Leonard, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 10 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 your deputy headteacher. 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:**

- At the time of our visit, class 'bubbles' in Years 1, 2 and 3 were self-isolating at home. Approximately two thirds of pupils have had to learn from home since the start of the autumn term.
- Pupils are studying their full range of subjects. You told us how you have adapted the way some subjects are taught. For example, in Spanish, the specialist teacher plans the lessons, but they are delivered by class teachers.
- You explained how teachers used a range of tests and tasks in September to assess pupils' new starting points. You have altered the timetable to give more time in the morning for subjects such as reading, writing and mathematics.
- Reading remains a priority. Teachers noted some gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge. Extra phonics sessions take place in the afternoon and phonic catch-up packs are provided for pupils to complete at home.
- In mathematics, teachers recap the methods and strategies pupils have been taught to use. You said this was because many pupils were getting confused after learning different methods while learning at home.
- You described how you introduced a 'bounce-back' curriculum to complement your usual curriculum. This includes 'feel-good Friday', where pupils have the chance to talk about their worries and feelings linked to COVID-19.
- In the early years, teachers noticed that children's skills in listening and attention are not as strong as usual. You extended the period of time used for

transition into Reception classes so that children could work in smaller groups to develop these skills from the start.

- You have developed a remote-learning strategy and revised this each time a bubble has been sent home. You explained that the work set for pupils to do when they are self-isolating matches the work delivered in school. Teachers provide live and recorded lessons online. Pupils choose when to do the activities from their 'learning menu'.

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 Sandwell. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Harwood  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**