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Donna Park
Principal
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Dear Miss Park

Ofsted remote visit to The Blyth Academy

Following my remote visit with Fiona Manuel, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 17 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 and senior leaders. 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:

- A small proportion of pupils have spent time studying from home due to COVID-19 since September. A very small number of pupils have had to self-isolate for two or more separate periods of time.
- All pupils are studying the usual range of subjects that make up the school's curriculum. Year 11 pupils are continuing to study courses that would usually have been completed and externally assessed in the summer term of Year 10. You told us that this is because you want pupils to have the knowledge that they need should they choose to study these subjects at post-16.
- A range of assessments have been used to check pupils' new starting points. Leaders explained that these assessments have shown that a higher proportion of Year 7 pupils than usual need support with their reading. You have organised one-to-one intervention for those pupils who you feel need support.
- Assessments in Years 10 and 11 have identified that some pupils need help with structuring extended pieces of written work and to rebuild their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar. You told us that all lessons now begin with a focus on the accuracy of written work and that additional small group sessions are available for pupils to access.
- Remote education is available to those pupils who are studying from home. You explained that remote education aligns with the curriculum being taught in school.

- Recently, teachers have begun live-streaming lessons to those pupils who are self-isolating. You told us that if a pupil needs equipment to access remote education, then you deliver this to the pupil's home on the first day of absence.

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, the chief executive of the Northern Education Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northumberland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Graham Findlay
Her Majesty's Inspector