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18 January 2021

Alison Maddison  
Headteacher  
Hurworth Primary School  
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Hurworth  
County Durham  
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Dear Mrs Maddison

### **Ofsted visit to Hurworth Primary School**

Following my visit with Lee Elliott, 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 the curriculum. 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 work from home this term. One 'bubble' of children in the early years had to work from home for eight days in November 2020 due to COVID-19.
- Pupils returned to school on 3 September 2020 and participated in a two-week transition period, prior to moving into their new classes. During the first few weeks, no music was taught except in Year 5. Music lessons have now been reintroduced to the curriculum, with adapted activities to develop pupils' rhythm and pitch. All pupils are now studying their usual range of subjects.
- Recent assessments in reading showed that some pupils needed additional support to improve their phonics skills. These pupils received individual and small-group support to help revisit reading skills taught prior to March 2020.
- In mathematics, teachers' checks highlighted that pupils' mathematical fluency was not as strong as before the period when schools were only open to some pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions. Pupils' understanding of fractions is less developed than it used to be. Teachers are spending more time reinforcing pupils' knowledge in mathematics and revisiting curriculum content from previous years.
- In the early years, staff are adapting their teaching to increase the time children learn outdoors. Children have recently completed a project to collect sticks, leaves and flowers to help describe the outdoors and increase their understanding of the world.
- If pupils need to work from home teachers provide them with daily activities in reading, mathematics and topics from the wider curriculum. Typically, activities include the use of digital resources, although resources such as

reading books are also provided if needed. Staff keep in touch with pupils via the telephone or video conferencing.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Jenner  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**