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Aimee Lyall
Principal
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Dear Ms Lyall

Ofsted visit to City of London Academy Highbury Grove

Following my visit with Sophie Welch, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 3 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.

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 two of the vice principals. 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:

- The school opened fully to all pupils on 11 September 2020. Pupils attend on a full-time basis.
- Attendance is lower than normal for this time of year. Leaders communicate regularly with parents to reassure them and answer any questions regarding their children's attendance at school.
- All pupils are studying the usual range of subjects on offer at the school.
- In Years 7 to 9, leaders have changed the order in which content is taught in some subjects, including design and technology, drama, art and computer science. Pupils are currently doing less practical work than in the past. Leaders aim to deliver more practical subject content by the summer term 2021.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to study their chosen GCSE subjects. Pupils in Year 11 currently have an additional lesson at the end of the day, on four days each week. You are using this extra time to focus on English, mathematics, science and pupils' well-being.
- Teachers have checked pupils' new starting points in all subjects. They have adapted subject plans to address gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. For example, in Year 7, a 'bridging' unit is in place to help pupils catch up on what they have forgotten or missed in mathematics.
- Staff have also found that many pupils find it more difficult now to complete extended writing tasks. Leaders have prioritised writing skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils who are not attending school, for example because they are self-isolating, access the curriculum remotely through a digital platform. Teachers

share their lessons and resources online. Leaders are reviewing different approaches to remote education to determine the most effective system for pupils and staff.

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 chief executive officer of the City of London Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Islington. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jude Wilson
Her Majesty's Inspector