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Alison Parr
Principal
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Dear Mrs Parr

Ofsted visit to Blackfriars Academy

Following my visit with Wayne Simner, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 15 October 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, in your role as principal and senior leader responsible for safeguarding, members of the senior leadership team and the deputy regional director of the trust. 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 to all pupils on 3 September 2020. All pupils are expected to attend full time.
- Attendance is currently below what it was at this time last year. Staff are supporting families who are anxious about sending their children to school.
- Pupils are studying the full range of subjects and units of work. However, some changes have been made to practical work in science and food technology. Planned swimming lessons and hydrotherapy have been temporarily replaced with activities, including yoga. You expect pupils to return to their usual curriculum by the summer term 2021.
- In the 'questioning' unit of work, teachers' checks have shown that pupils need extra work in aspects of reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, staff are focusing on areas such as comprehension and spelling in English, and time and measurement in mathematics.
- Teachers' checks on pupils' learning in the 'exploratory' unit have shown that pupils need extra help with communication. Teachers are planning additional opportunities for pupils to interact with each other and with staff.
- In the 'immersive' unit, teachers' checks have shown that pupils need extra help with being independent. Leaders said that staff are encouraging and supporting pupils to do things for themselves.

- Currently you use remote learning to support pupils' learning when they are absent from school. You have a system in place that includes the use of online learning should there be a need for pupils to be taught remotely in the future. Leaders say learning will be in line with the usual curriculum.

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 academy council, the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the Shaw Education multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Yates
Her Majesty's Inspector