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15 October 2020

Mrs Julie Parnaby  
Headteacher  
Simonside Primary School  
Glasgow Road  
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Tyne and Wear  
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Dear Mrs Parnaby

### **Ofsted visit to Simonside Primary School**

Following my visit with Gill Wild, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI),] to your school on 29 September 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, the deputy headteacher, and your attendance and inclusion coordinators. 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, a different 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 pupils in Years 1 to 6 on 8 September 2020. Children in the Reception started the next day. Pupils are expected to attend full time.
- Initially, attendance was in line with that seen normally for the time of year. Since then, it has fallen below the usual level because several families are self-isolating. Staff from the school are keeping in touch, offering support and encouraging pupils to return to school at the appropriate time.
- Leaders have put in place a 'recovery curriculum'. In the mornings, pupils are revisiting areas of mathematics and English they were taught before the period when schools were only open to some pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions. In the afternoons, pupils are doing projects that integrate knowledge from across the foundation subjects. Leaders want to return to their normal curriculum as soon as possible.
- Teachers are using assessments from their preferred reading scheme to check what phonics knowledge pupils know and remember. Leaders explained that they will group pupils who have similar starting points together and may use their COVID-19 catch-up premium to increase the amount of small-group tuition they provide.
- In mathematics, teachers are checking what content pupils can remember. They then plan to focus on teaching only the most essential mathematical knowledge that pupils missed in the spring and summer terms. In the next fortnight, teachers will use a range of assessments to pinpoint gaps in pupils' knowledge.

- Leaders are teaching the usual curriculum in most subjects across the wider curriculum. They have adapted some content in subjects, such as music, physical education and science.
- In the Reception, more teaching is being delivered outside. In Year 1, classrooms have been adapted so that pupils can choose their own activities for part of the day.
- The school plans to deliver its usual subject content digitally, should this be needed as a result of further restrictions.

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 South Tyneside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**