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Helen Langeveld
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Langeveld

Ofsted visit to Watford St John's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Wendy Varney, 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 the school business manager. 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:

- You opened the school on 7 September 2020 for all pupils from Years 1 to 4 to attend full time. Children in Reception initially attended for part-time transition sessions. They attended school full time from 18 September 2020.
- Pupils' attendance is slightly below that of the same time last year. You have written to parents to make clear your expectations for children to attend school regularly.
- Teachers are providing lessons to support pupils' well-being. Pupils study all subjects across the curriculum. You told us that some of this is taught in smaller chunks to help build pupils' stamina for learning.
- Your teachers have checked what pupils in Years 1 and 2 know and remember about their phonics. Pupils have phonics lessons twice a day, as well as additional sessions for those who require extra support. Teachers are focused on promoting pupils' love of reading.
- In mathematics, your assessments have prompted teachers to place a stronger emphasis on pupils' recall of number bonds and timetables. Teachers are checking what pupils have remembered about the things they learned in mathematics before the period when the school was only open to some pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Leaders have used this time to develop new curriculum plans. Teachers are using these plans to address gaps in pupils' knowledge. Teachers use questions to find out what pupils remember about different subjects.
- Leaders have developed their approaches to remote learning. You stated that you have put in place the resources to help teachers deliver learning online.

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, the director of education for the Diocese of St Albans, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Mellors
Her Majesty's Inspector