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Sarah Winter
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Dear Mrs Winter

Ofsted visit to Ilketshall St Lawrence School

Following my visit with Tessa Holledge, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 13 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, your lead teacher and your special educational needs coordinator. 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 3 September 2020. Children in Reception Year, as they normally do, started with a short transitional period.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with what leaders would normally expect for this time of year.
- Pupils are studying most of their usual subjects, although there is no cookery at the moment. Staff have adapted other subjects; computing is taught in two groups rather than one, all physical education takes place outside, and pupils observe rather than conduct any practical science experiments.
- Staff use assessment tests alongside conversations with pupils and quizzes in class, to work out the gaps in pupils' learning. Staff note that younger children's independent learning skills are less advanced, and some older pupils, initially lacking stamina, are finding it more difficult to sustain their concentration. Assessments have also been carried out to identify pupils who might need additional pastoral support.
- Staff are focusing on extending pupils' vocabulary through their 'never dodge a good word' approach. Younger children are using phonic resources to help develop their speech, language and communication skills. Pupils in Years 1 to 3 are using phonic readers to reinforce their decoding skills. Where pupils are not where staff expected them to be in their reading, they are having additional support or extra tutoring or both.

- In mathematics, staff are concentrating on the content pupils have missed during the period when schools were only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions. Pupils also have more activities to practise adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing numbers. Some pupils have struggled to accurately recall number facts, which has hampered their fluency in arithmetic calculations, such as division.
- In other subjects, staff are adapting lessons to cover some of the content pupils have covered previously. For example, in religious education, pupils are having to revisit the key concepts when studying the religion of Islam.
- Remote education is provided from day one to any pupil who is unable to attend school for reasons related to COVID-19. Leaders have contingency plans in place to provide remote education to all pupils should this become necessary. The work provided is aligned with the subjects that pupils are normally taught.

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 chief executive officer of the ASSET Education multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Randall
Her Majesty's Inspector