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27 October 2020

Anna Stevenson
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Stevenson

Ofsted visit to Birches Green Junior School

Following my visit with Deb Jenkins, 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 and the senior leadership team, including the senior leader responsible for safeguarding. 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 4 September 2020. All pupils are expected to attend full time.
- Attendance is below what you normally expect at this time of year. You told us that you have shared your expectations about attendance on the school's website. At the time of the visit, all pupils in Year 5 were isolating.
- Leaders introduced a new curriculum, as planned, in September 2020. You told us that pupils are studying the subjects they normally would. You have made adaptations to the curriculum because of COVID-19. For example, in September there was a focus on mental health, well-being and support for pupils. You told us that you have made changes in some subjects, including music and physical education (PE).
- Pupils' reading skills were assessed at the start of this term. Teachers have used this information to plan learning that covers what has been missed as a result of COVID-19. For example, Year 3 pupils have additional phonics sessions at the start of each week. Some pupils in Years 3 to 6 are finding reading comprehension difficult, and you are planning extra support for these pupils.
- Assessment information in mathematics has shown that some pupils in Years 3 and 4 have fallen behind where you expect them to be. Teachers have prioritised revisiting arithmetic skills to build pupils' fluency in their number work.

- You are providing remote education to pupils who are currently self-isolating. This is a blended approach of live teaching, online tasks and paper-based activities for pupils. You are confident about using this approach if more pupils are required to self-isolate or if there are any future local 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 interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jo Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector