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Caroline Sledge
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sledge

Ofsted visit to Meppershall Church of England Academy

Following my visit with Cindy Impey, 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. 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 was fully open for Year 1 to Year 4 pupils on 7 September 2020. Children in Reception attended part time from 14 to 17 September 2020 and then full time from 18 September 2020.
- Pupils' attendance is currently better than is typical for this time of the year. Pupils say they are happy to be back at school with their teachers and friends.
- You and your teachers have prioritised pupils' learning in reading, including phonics, and mathematics. While pupils study all the subjects they would normally, less time is being spent on some of them. You plan for pupils to return to the usual timings for each subject as soon as possible and by the summer term 2021 at the latest.
- Following checks on what pupils remember, teachers have revised their teaching plans in reading, including phonics. Lessons focus on filling the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. To make up for lost reading time, teachers are promoting reading for pleasure through daily story times in all classes.
- In mathematics, teachers are supporting pupils to catch up with their learning too. Teachers help pupils to develop their number skills and recall times tables, so that they can undertake more challenging work.
- You and your teachers have adapted lessons for subjects such as science and history. Teachers have started to teach these lessons and will assess pupils' knowledge as they go.
- You have put a system for remote education in place, should it be needed. You have shared expectations with staff and parents. Teachers intend for any remote lessons to continue the learning that would normally have taken place in school.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Webb
Her Majesty's Inspector