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5 November 2020

Simon England
Headteacher
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Dear Mr England

Ofsted visit to Ashwell Primary School

Following my visit with Kim Hall, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 22 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 your deputy headteacher. 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 on 3 September 2020 for all pupils from Reception to Year 6 to attend full time.
- Since the school opened, pupils' attendance has been slightly higher than at a similar time last year.
- At the start of the term, leaders introduced a two-week 'recovery curriculum' to support pupils' well-being and to help them get used to being back in school. Teachers planned a 'WOW week' of activities to help pupils to re-engage with learning. Pupils now study the full range of subjects across the curriculum.
- Teachers have checked the phonics knowledge of Year 2 pupils. Pupils in this class receive extra support in addition to their daily phonics session to help them catch up. Your school library is open, and pupils across the school are encouraged to borrow books and read at home.
- Your teachers are still finding out what gaps pupils have in their mathematical understanding. Teachers are giving a greater focus to pupils' recall of number bonds and times tables.
- Teachers are using your curriculum plans to identify what they need to teach. They are planning topics to cover the gaps in pupils' knowledge. Teachers are using questions to find out what pupils do, and do not, remember.

- Leaders have trained all staff in the use of your chosen online learning platform. You have gathered the views of parents to help refine your plans for delivering the curriculum remotely.

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 Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Mellors
Her Majesty's Inspector