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Sarah Jones
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Jones

Ofsted visit to St Mary's Church of England Aided Primary School

Following my visit with Simon Hunter, 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, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and the curriculum leader for English. 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 to all pupils from the Reception Year to Year 6 on 2 September 2020. Children in the Nursery class started on 14 September 2020. All pupils are expected to attend full time.
- Pupils' attendance is similar to where it was at this time last year.
- Teachers have identified that children in the Reception class have gaps in their phonics knowledge. Your assessments show that some pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not read as fluently as they did when they were last in school full time in March 2020. Extra support has been put in place to help those pupils catch up.
- In mathematics, you have found that some pupils have forgotten basic number skills, such as doubling, halving and the recall of multiplication tables. Teachers are revisiting the teaching of these aspects to help pupils regain this lost knowledge.
- Pupils are studying all other subjects in the primary curriculum. Teachers have started to check the knowledge pupils have remembered or have forgotten in subjects such as science, geography and history. They are using this information to adapt the content of these subjects to take account of pupils' new starting points. You are aiming to return all pupils to your normal curriculum in all subjects by the summer term 2021.
- You have developed a range of resources to support pupils' remote learning which reflect the subjects pupils study in school. Staff have had training on how to use these resources. You plan to provide more training for parents and carers so that they can help their children use these resources in the event of 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 governing body, the director of education for the diocese of Manchester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bury. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Iwaskow
Her Majesty's Inspector