

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Kerry Stamp
Headteacher
Thornhill Primary School
Byron Road
Southampton
Hampshire
SO19 6FH

Dear Mrs Stamp

Ofsted visit to Thornhill Primary School

Following my visit with Laurie Anderson, 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 other senior leaders, and the home school liaison officer. 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:

- Term began for pupils in Years 1 to 6 on 7 September 2020. With very few exceptions, all pupils are expected to attend full time. In line with the school's usual practice, Reception-age children started part time a week later, and full time on 21 September.
- All pupils have returned to school, and attendance so far has been the same as at this time last year. Typically, around half of the absences on any day are linked to COVID-19. The pastoral team are supporting families to understand public health guidance and overcome any anxieties.
- Pupils are studying their usual range of subjects, with more time given to English, mathematics and personal, social and health education (PHSE) at present. Some aspects of the curriculum are not being covered at the moment, such as swimming and school trips, because facilities remain closed to schools. Leaders hope to return to the full curriculum by the summer term 2021.
- Teachers have tested pupils to see what they remember in English and mathematics. The biggest gaps are in writing, because pupils had less chance to practise during the period when schools were only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions. Pupils at the earliest stages of reading have fallen back the most, so this is where extra support is being directed.

- In mathematics, teachers have found they need to focus on building up pupils' mental arithmetic and number skills again. 'Mind the gap' days are covering learning that was missed during the summer term.
- In other subjects, teachers start topics with the usual 'entrance pass' to check what pupils already know, to guide what to teach. Where needed, they teach the content for the previous year group.
- The trust has set up a remote-learning programme to cover the first two weeks if pupils have to stay at home. Leaders plan to develop this further, with pre-recorded lessons and online activities. They are buying tablet computers so that all pupils can access online learning at home.

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

Yours sincerely

Alison Bradley
Her Majesty's Inspector