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Jane Parsons
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Parsons

Ofsted visit to St Stephen's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Tim Vaughan, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 6 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 members of your senior leadership team, including your early years and key stage 2 leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and the pastoral leader. 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 on 2 September 2020.
- Pupils' attendance is above what you would expect at this time of year. On the day of the visit, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were isolating at home.
- Teachers have assessed pupils' knowledge in English, including phonics and writing. You are currently reviewing what these checks tell you about what the pupils have remembered from their previous learning. You are prioritising the teaching of reading, for instance by increasing the time that pupils spend reading in all subjects.
- Teachers are carrying out ongoing checks in mathematics to find out what pupils remember. This information is being used to adapt the curriculum so that pupils can catch up on any missed learning.
- Teachers in early years have identified a need to support children with their communication and language development. They have also placed an increased emphasis on the teaching of early reading.
- You explained that the pupils returned to school with fewer gaps in their knowledge of the wider curriculum, in comparison to English and mathematics. All pupils, including those not attending school, are studying their usual curriculum.
- Teachers have continued to develop the way they deliver learning remotely. This includes making the learning more tailored to pupils' individual needs. You have a plan in place to deliver the school's curriculum remotely if needed in the future.

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 local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Stillings
Her Majesty's Inspector