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Carol Woods
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Woods

Ofsted remote visit to Altham St James Church of England Primary School

Following my remote visit with Tim Vaughan, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 10 November 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. Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, we made this visit remotely to reduce pressure on the school.

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.

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 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 told us that a small proportion of pupils have had to study from home since the start of term.
- Pupils are currently studying their usual range of subjects. They are learning the usual content in each subject, save a few exceptions. For example, in physical education, swimming lessons have been put on hold due to the temporary closure of local swimming pools.
- You and your staff have assessed how well pupils learned during the period when schools were only open to some pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions. You have used regular informal checking alongside formal assessment.
- You have used the information from your assessments to make minor adjustments to your curriculum plans. Teachers are now making sure that pupils have learned the knowledge that was taught between March and July 2020, while delivering the usual curriculum.
- In English, for example, this has led to a greater focus on aspects of spelling, punctuation and grammar that were taught differently during the summer term. You have put extra support in place to help pupils who have made less progress with their reading, including their knowledge of phonics, than you would usually expect.
- In mathematics, pupils continue to learn the usual curriculum, but staff are spending more time than usual going over previous learning. For example, staff have identified that pupils need to refresh their knowledge of decimals.

- Pupils continue to study the wider curriculum in much the same way as usual.
- You have developed systems for pupils to access most of their usual curriculum if they have to self-isolate. You also have plans for a more interactive approach to delivering remote education in the event of the early years, infant or junior 'bubbles' being sent home. You intend for this approach to incorporate aspects of 'live' teaching.

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 Blackburn, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Will Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector