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19 November 2020

Wendy Aitken  
Executive Headteacher  
St Mary's Cockerton Church of England Primary School  
Newton Lane  
Cockerton  
Darlington  
County Durham  
DL3 9EX

Dear Mrs Aitken

### **Ofsted visit to St Mary's Cockerton Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit with Zoe Lightfoot, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 3 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.

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 head of school, the deputy headteacher and the inclusion lead. 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 (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 7 September 2020. All pupils are expected to attend full time.
- Attendance is above that at this time last year.
- Pupils are studying their usual range of subjects. You told us that in physical education pupils are doing more activities that take place outside.
- You have checked to see what pupils can remember in reading, writing, mathematics and phonics. You have used a mixture of assessments and classwork to do so.
- Some pupils who have gaps in their phonics knowledge now have additional teaching to help them to catch up. In reading, teachers are focusing on pupils' ability to infer information from a text, in addition to practising their comprehension of texts.
- In mathematics, there is now a greater focus on basic arithmetic and calculation strategies. You gave the rapid recall of number bonds and times tables as examples.
- For subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics, you have looked at the content that was not covered when schools were not open to all pupils. You told us that teachers are incorporating this content as they teach over the course of this year.
- You have a system of remote learning ready should it be needed in the future. You are already using a commercial online resource for homework. You plan to

use this for remote learning. Your plans are aligned to the whole-school curriculum.

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 Dove Academy Trust, the director of education for the diocese of Durham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Darlington. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Wardle  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**