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Sian Mills
Acting headteacher
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Dear Mrs Mills

Ofsted remote visit to Brackensdale Primary School

Following my remote visit with Stephanie Innes-Taylor, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 12 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 the acting deputy headteacher and the acting assistant headteacher. 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:

- At the time of the visit, the Year 4 and Year 6 class 'bubbles' had just returned to school following a period of isolation at home. A small number of pupils have worked from home this term.
- Teachers are teaching the same subjects as usual. They have changed the way in which they teach some subjects, and the order in which they teach some of the content. For example, in Year 6, teachers are concentrating on the learning that pupils will need for their end-of-key-stage assessments.
- Staff carried out formal assessments in English and mathematics when pupils returned to school. These checks showed that there were some common areas, such as knowing their times tables, that pupils were less secure in than previously.
- Pupils had also fallen behind in reading. To make up for lost learning, staff are running additional phonics sessions for all pupils in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. Teachers and teaching assistants are providing additional support, both during lesson time and at other times in the day, for pupils who need it to catch up.
- Teachers have changed the order in which they teach some of the content of the mathematics curriculum to prioritise the knowledge that pupils need to learn and revise. Teachers have also changed the way in which they teach mathematics. For example, they use physical objects more frequently than

they used to, to help pupils learn and remember important mathematical knowledge.

- The additional time needed for reading practice leaves less time to cover the curriculum in other subjects. Because of this, teachers have changed the way in which they teach subjects such as science.
- Leaders use different approaches to remote education according to the circumstances. For individual pupils who are self-isolating, work for English, mathematics and other subjects is posted on the school's website. This work includes a mixture of video clips and other resources. Pupils are expected to complete three pieces of work each day. When a bubble is sent home, all the work for the week is set using the school's communications technology. This may be a mixture of new learning and learning that pupils need to go over again.

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 rapid improvement board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Derby. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Deirdre Duignan
Her Majesty's Inspector