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24 November 2020

Sarah Pickering  
Headteacher  
Mill Water School  
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East Budleigh  
Budleigh Salterton  
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Dear Mrs Pickering

### **Ofsted remote visit to Mill Water School**

Following my remote visit with Sarah McGinnis, 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, your deputy headteacher and leaders who are responsible for the curriculum. 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:**

- Approximately one in ten pupils have had to isolate since the school opened. Typically, isolated pupils have worked from home for between one and three days.
- Teachers have assessed pupils against their individual targets. You found that pupils had not lost any ground and that some had made progress.
- Initially, your curriculum focused on pupils' communication and language, physical development and personal and social education, to support pupils returning to school. After two weeks, pupils returned to studying the full range of subjects.
- Reading is a priority for pupils in the early years and Years 1 to 6. Your staff teach phonics by encouraging pupils to overlearn individual sounds. Bespoke lessons are delivered to help those pupils who need to catch up.
- Pupils are learning the full mathematics curriculum. Teachers regularly check pupils' mathematical knowledge to support pupils to work towards their individual targets.

- You have added more outdoor learning opportunities to your wider curriculum. You did this to prioritise pupils' well-being. You have found that many of your pupils respond better when learning outside.
- You have adapted the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9. For example, you have changed when and where you take pupils outside of school. This is so pupils can continue to learn key skills within their communities, while accessing all subjects in your school's curriculum.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to work towards their entry level qualifications. You believe that the Year 11 are on track to achieve their potential by the end of this academic year.
- Your post-16 provision has been reorganised for this year. You want to ensure that your students still access work experience as normal. However, you plan to do this in the summer term, when you hope current restrictions may be lifted.
- Due to the varying needs of your pupils, you have delivered a varied package of remote learning. You have supported parents to work on pupils' individual targets when learning at home. Teachers have delivered online lessons for pupils who respond well to this approach.

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 chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Barnes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**