

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



24 November 2020

Anna Conley  
Headteacher  
Howbridge Infant School  
Dengie Close  
Witham  
Essex  
CM8 1DJ

Dear Ms Conley

### **Ofsted remote visit to Howbridge Infant School**

Following my remote visit with Marc White, 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 you, your deputy headteacher and two members from your senior leadership team responsible for 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:**

- Since the beginning of term, the Year 2 'bubble' has needed to isolate and work from home for seven days. You are pleased that pupils have returned to school keen and ready to learn. You are particularly pleased in the way that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have positively adapted to the changes in routines and the additional measures in place.
- Pupils are studying their full range of subjects and all of the normal content. In some subjects, teachers have changed the way in which activities are being taught.
- Across all year groups, teachers are checking what pupils know and can do, to assess pupils' starting points in all subjects. Teachers identified that pupils, particularly in Year 2, have retained a lot of their learning. They also identified that some pupils need to revisit some areas in English and mathematics. Leaders have prioritised these aspects in teaching.
- Teachers have identified that some pupils, across all year groups, need to secure their understanding of sounds. Similarly, pupils in Years 1 and 2 need to develop their writing stamina and accuracy in terms of grammar and handwriting skills. You are providing additional teaching to help pupils catch up.

- In mathematics, teachers are making sure that pupils are provided with more activities to help them practise their number skills and accurately form their numbers.
- You are pleased that music teaching can continue, and that you are able to provide specialist teaching online in school. Pupils still have opportunities to apply their skills and knowledge through practical activities in subjects such as art and science.
- Teachers have provided, and continue to provide, a combination of digital and paper-based activities for pupils when they are not in school. The work teachers provide is aligned to the school's 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 governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Cindy Impey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**