

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



26 November 2020

Lucy Campbell and Vanessa Hall
Co-headteachers
Whitecotes Primary Academy
Whitecotes Lane
Walton
Chesterfield
Derbyshire
S40 3HJ

Dear Mrs Campbell and Miss Hall,

Ofsted remote visit to Whitecotes Primary Academy

Following my remote visit with Shaheen Hussain, Seconded Ofsted Inspector, 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, the senior leader responsible for safeguarding and the pastoral leader. 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:

- Two class 'bubbles' have had to work from home since the start of term. A small number of pupils and staff have needed to self-isolate since September 2020.
- Pupils are studying most of the usual range of subjects. Some parts of the physical education and music curriculums have been moved to later in the school year. Leaders plan to return to the full curriculum in these subjects by the summer term 2021.
- Teachers' checks on pupils' reading knowledge show that some pupils are not as secure as they used to be in their understanding of phonics. Some older pupils need support to understand the books they read. Teachers are dedicating more time to the teaching of phonics and reading so that pupils can catch up.
- Teachers have checked pupils' knowledge of spelling and punctuation. Some pupils have fallen behind in these areas. Leaders have made sure that these pupils receive extra support.
- In mathematics, teachers have identified gaps in some pupils' number and calculation skills. Pupils are receiving support to help fill these gaps.
- Leaders are prioritising pupils' health and well-being. In personal, social, health and economic education lessons, pupils spend more time learning about

relationships and online safety than they would usually. Teachers provide more than two hours of physical activity every week for all pupils.

- Leaders have developed a remote learning programme for pupils who are self-isolating. They have made sure that it is closely matched to the school's usual curriculum. Staff check on the progress and well-being of pupils who are learning remotely.

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 Cavendish Learning Trust, the regional school's commissioner and the director of children's services for Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Damien Turrell
Her Majesty's Inspector