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Clare Hollingsworth
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hollingsworth

Ofsted remote visit to Swallow Dell Primary and Nursery School

Following my remote visit with Fiona Webb, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 5 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 deputy headteacher, the inclusion manager, the leader of the WelHat Hub based at the school, the business manager, the assistant headteacher and a teacher who is an acting member of the senior leadership team. 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:

- The school opened to pupils on 1 September 2020. Pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 were expected to attend full time. Children in early years had a phased introduction to the school.
- Pupils' attendance is a little higher when compared with the same period last year.
- Pupils are studying the usual range of subjects. Swimming lessons, which are part of the physical education curriculum, have been paused.
- At the beginning of the autumn term, you introduced the 'transition curriculum'. This focused on re-establishing relationships and checking on pupils' welfare. The school then moved to the 'recovery curriculum', with a focus on physical, social and emotional health. Just before the October 2020 half-term holiday, you re-introduced the school's usual curriculum, but with a greater emphasis on mathematics and English.
- Teachers' checks have led to additional phonics sessions for pupils and extra support for some pupils who have gaps in their early reading knowledge. Teachers are also spending more time reading with and to pupils. This is to re-establish habits of regular reading, as well as helping pupils by re-visiting important vocabulary that some have lost.

- In the main, the mathematics curriculum remains unchanged from that followed prior to March 2020. Teachers are focusing more on place value to ensure that pupils have a firm foundation for their calculations.
- In subjects other than mathematics and English, teachers are largely following the usual curriculum plans for each year group. Teachers are checking pupils' understanding in lessons and adapting their teaching where necessary. Subject leaders are currently looking at what content may have been missed since March 2020. Using this information, they will consider any changes to the usual curriculum.
- You and other leaders plan to build on the remote learning arrangements you put in place when the school was only partially open. Should these arrangements be needed in future, you will provide live and recorded lessons as well as home-learning packs, including for pupils who have limited access to computers and the internet.

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 Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Winter
Her Majesty's Inspector