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Shaun Valentine
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Valentine

Ofsted remote visit to St Edmundsbury CE VA Primary School

Following my remote visit with Isabel Davis, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 17 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 and the pastoral support worker. 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 start of the academic year, a small number of pupils have had to work from home because they have been self-isolating.
- Teachers started the term by providing a 'recovery curriculum' to help pupils get used to being back in school. Pupils are now studying all subjects across the curriculum. Leaders have implemented a daily catch-up timetable. Teachers use this to close gaps in pupils' learning identified from their checks at the start of the term.
- The reading leader has made quick checks to find out where pupils are up to in learning to read. Teachers use this information to provide additional phonic sessions to help pupils catch up. Teachers have given a higher priority to reading. Pupils have more time to read individually to practise their reading skills. In mathematics, your assessments have prompted teachers to place a stronger emphasis on pupils' recall of number facts and times tables. You told us that pupils need extra support with their calculation skills.
- Teachers are using your curriculum plans to identify what they need to teach. They are planning topics to cover the gaps in pupils' knowledge. At the start of each topic, teachers find out what the pupils have remembered and what they would like to find out.
- You have made changes to remote education following the period when schools were only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Teachers are receiving training to help them develop resources for pupils to use at home.

- Leaders' plans for remote education provide activities that a pupil would expect to cover in a typical school day. The plans include times when parents or pupils can contact teachers with questions or requests for help.

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 director of education for the diocese of Bury St Edmunds, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Mellors
Her Majesty's Inspector