

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Rebecca James
Headteacher
Forestdale Primary School
Wareham Road
Frankley
Birmingham
West Midlands
B45 0JS

Dear Mrs James

Ofsted visit to Forestdale Primary School

Following my visit with Nicola Harwood, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 2 December 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.

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 and your leadership team. You are the person responsible for safeguarding. We did not speak to pupils because of the protective measures in place.

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 (coronavirus) 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 two thirds of pupils have had to self-isolate and learn from home at some point since the start of term due to COVID-19.
- Pupils are studying their usual range of subjects. You have adjusted the curriculum for this year so that pupils have more time in English and mathematics. Your aim is to return to your usual curriculum by summer term 2021.
- Teachers have carried out checks in reading, writing and mathematics to see what pupils can remember. You have specific catch-up plans in place for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils to help support learning.
- Reading remains a priority. You have noticed that younger pupils returned to school with gaps in their use of sounds. You told us that teachers have put in extra phonics sessions for pupils who need to catch up. You have employed an additional teacher to support those pupils who are furthest behind.
- In mathematics, teachers have identified gaps in pupils' times-tables knowledge and reasoning skills. You are using additional curriculum time to focus on these areas.
- You have placed additional emphasis on personal, social and health education in the wider curriculum. This is because you want to prioritise mental well-being and help pupils to manage their feelings.

- Pupils who are self-isolating are given paper-based work packs supplemented by resources on the school's website, so that they can study from home. You have plans in place for a similar approach should you need to close a class 'bubble'. You explained how remote education closely aligns to the curriculum taught in school.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Howes
Her Majesty's Inspector