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14 December 2020

Alison McHarg
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs McHarg

Ofsted remote visit to Michael Syddall Church of England Aided Primary School

Following my remote visit with Graham Findlay, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 19 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 curriculum leaders. 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:

- At the time of this visit, no whole-class or year-group 'bubbles' have had to isolate since the school fully reopened in September 2020. However, approximately a quarter of pupils have had to study from home on an individual basis at varying times, because of COVID-19.
- Pupils are studying their usual range of subjects. You are aiming for pupils to return to their usual curriculum within these subjects by summer term 2021.
- At the beginning of this term, leaders reviewed what learning pupils had missed in English and mathematics during summer term 2020. Teachers are providing past curriculum content alongside usual lessons to help pupils to secure missed knowledge.
- You are prioritising reading and phonics. In Years 1 and 2, pupils are revisiting phonics sessions from the previous term to practise the skills they need to read and spell. In Years 3 to 6, pupils have additional reading sessions so that they can recapture the fluency they lost over the summer term.
- Teachers' checks in mathematics showed that, on returning to school in September, pupils had gaps in their understanding of calculation and

mathematical vocabulary. Teachers have adapted their plans to enable pupils to revise the calculation methods that they missed over the summer term.

- You have directed teachers to adjust their curriculum plans for subjects such as physical education. They have reordered some activities, such as swimming and sports competitions, for a later point this academic year.
- Leaders are providing online learning for pupils who have to study from home. Teachers provide online activities and lessons compatible with what pupils would be learning if they were present in school. To date, only a small number of individual pupils have studied remotely each week. Leaders are considering plans to provide remote education to a class or year-group bubble, should it be required.
- You are providing guidance to parents so that they can support their children to learn at home.

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 Leeds, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alison Aitchison
Her Majesty's Inspector