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4 January 2021

Angharad Paterson
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Dear Mrs Paterson

Ofsted visit to Mary Exton Primary School

Following my visit with Al Mistrano, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 3 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 the acting deputy headteacher. 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:

- Since the beginning of September 2020, no class 'bubbles' have been isolating. During this term, around one in 10 pupils have had to learn from home for a few days due to COVID-19.
- Pupils are studying the normal range of subjects. They are learning the usual content within each subject, with a few exceptions. In physical education, swimming lessons have been put on hold, as has singing in music. Leaders aim for pupils to learn the full planned content in all subjects by the summer term 2021.
- Teachers are using a range of informal checks to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding in reading (including phonics), writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have purchased more books for pupils to practise their reading. Pupils in Year 3 are receiving extra lessons in phonics and spelling. Teachers are promoting reading for pleasure through daily story times in all classes.
- Leaders are prioritising pupils' writing across the school. Teachers are giving pupils more opportunities to practise their writing in other subjects. Pupils are being supported to improve their writing skills through different types of writing.
- In mathematics, teachers are spending more time than usual going over previous learning. They are helping pupils to refresh their knowledge of number facts and times tables.

- In subjects such as science and history, teachers check what pupils know during lessons. Leaders are adapting teaching plans so that pupils can learn knowledge they have missed or forgotten.
- Remote learning is in place for pupils who need to learn from home. This is provided through live lessons online and resources on the school's website. While leaders acknowledge that pupils' experiences will be different, the work set is matched to what pupils would learn if they were 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 Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Webb
Her Majesty's Inspector