

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



06 January 2021

Kate Harvey
Principal
Beech Hyde Primary School and Nursery
Nurseries Road
Wheathampstead
St Albans
Hertfordshire
AL4 8TP

Dear Mrs Harvey

Ofsted remote visit to Beech Hyde Primary School and Nursery

Following my remote visit with Katherine Douglas, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 24 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 and 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:

- Since the beginning of the autumn term, no class 'bubbles' have been isolating and no pupils have had to work from home due to COVID-19.
- Pupils are learning their normal range of subjects. You are giving more teaching time to English and mathematics to help pupils catch up. In most other subjects, less of the content is being taught. You are aiming for pupils to return to the school's usual curriculum for all subjects by summer 2021.
- Teachers have checked pupils' new starting points in reading (including phonics), writing and mathematics. They have adjusted teaching plans to help pupils catch up with missed learning and revisit important concepts.
- Reading is a priority. Leaders' checks found that younger pupils need more practise in phonics and older pupils are not reading with their usual fluency and understanding. Teachers are providing a range of support to help pupils improve their reading.
- Pupils have forgotten how to use some of the spelling and grammar they have previously been taught. Teachers are revisiting these skills to help pupils apply them accurately in their writing.

- In mathematics, teachers are supporting pupils to practise and regain their number skills so that they can undertake more challenging work.
- For subjects such as science and history, teachers are checking what pupils know before they start to teach the next aspects. They change lessons to include the subject-specific knowledge that pupils have missed or forgotten.
- Leaders and teachers are ready to deliver learning remotely should it be needed in the future. Staff have received training to teach some lessons online. Your aim is for remote learning to mirror what pupils would be learning 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 board of trustees, the executive headteacher of the ATLAS Multi-Academy Trust, 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