

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



6 January 2021

Shelley Jones
Headteacher
de Vere Primary School
Kirby Hall Road
Castle Hedingham
Halstead
Essex
CO39EA

Dear Ms Jones

Ofsted visit to de Vere Primary School

Following my visit with Damian Loneragan, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 8 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, the senior leadership team and senior leader 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:

- No class 'bubbles' have needed to isolate since the beginning of term. Approximately one fifth of your pupils have been required to learn from home since the school reopened fully in September 2020.
- Your aim is to have the full curriculum in place by summer term 2021. So far this term, you have taught all of your usual subjects but initially did not teach design and technology. For your younger pupils, you have reorganised subjects such as science, history and geography into blocks of learning, each lasting for two weeks.
- Through teachers' assessments, you identified that pupils needed additional reading support in school. You now provide additional reading time, so pupils can revisit gaps that have developed in their reading knowledge. You have also introduced new interactive reading resources to supplement your reading curriculum. For younger pupils, you now provide extra phonics sessions which revisit sounds pupils have forgotten.
- In mathematics, you have found that pupils need additional support in areas such as place value, the four operations and times tables. Teachers have adapted their planning to help pupils become more secure in these areas.
- At the start of term, you reorganised the curriculum giving more time to physical education and personal, social and health education. You also initially delivered shorter lessons to help build pupils' stamina.

- In Reception, you have spent more time explicitly teaching communication and language skills. You have also introduced more activities to help children develop their play and self-help skills.
- When pupils have been isolating, they have received learning that is matched to what was being delivered in class. You have organised live teaching which teachers will deliver daily if a bubble is required to stay 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 and the chief executive office of the Attain Academy Partnership, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Milligan
Her Majesty's Inspector