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Sarah Garner
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Garner

Ofsted visit to Smitham Primary School

Following my visit with Lucy Bruce, 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 senior leadership team. 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 start of term, approximately one fifth of pupils across the school have had to learn from home for a period of time while isolating.
- Pupils are studying the school's usual curriculum subjects. Leaders have adapted some subject content to include learning missed in the spring and summer terms of 2020. Leaders plan to return pupils to their usual curriculum by the summer term 2021.
- In September, teachers tested all pupils in reading and Years 1, 2 and 3 in phonics. They found pupils had difficulty using inference skills to understand what they read. Teachers are concentrating on giving pupils more opportunities to answer questions about the texts they are reading. Some younger pupils had gaps in their knowledge of phonics. Teachers have organised extra lessons in phonics for these pupils.
- In mathematics, teachers' assessments identified that some pupils needed extra support with subtraction, multiplication and division. Leaders also found gaps in pupils' knowledge of shape, space and measure. Additional booster lessons are taking place to help pupils catch up in these areas.
- In the wider curriculum, leaders are concerned that some pupils' fitness and stamina have declined. You have timetabled extra physical education lessons each week to build pupils' fitness back up again. Teachers have changed arrangements for pupils' music lessons, ensuring there is a greater emphasis on music appreciation and the playing of instruments, rather than singing.

- You are providing remote education for all pupils who are isolating at home. Teachers provide work that reflects the learning taking place in school. A combination of paper-based and digital activities are available.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel-John Constable
Her Majesty's Inspector