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22 December 2020

Joe Mitchell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Mitchell

Ofsted visit to Pontefract Orchard Head Junior and Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit with Chris Cook, 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 other senior leaders, including those 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:

- Just under half of all pupils have had to study from home at some point since the start of the autumn term.
- Pupils are studying all of the subjects that you would normally be covering at this time of year. However, you have dedicated more time than you usually would to teach reading, writing and mathematics. You have also provided additional opportunities for pupils to read when teaching other subjects such as science and history. This is because you are aware of the gaps in pupils' knowledge of these subjects from the time when school was not fully open during the spring and summer terms 2020.
- Teachers have assessed pupils' abilities in reading and writing. These checks showed you that many pupils have not maintained their reading speed and stamina, following the time that school was not open to all pupils. You also discovered that for some younger pupils, the quality of their handwriting had declined during this time. To help address this, you have allocated additional learning time to both reading and writing.
- Checks of pupils' knowledge in mathematics showed you that a number of older children have not retained their knowledge of times tables. Assessments with younger pupils showed gaps in their knowledge of basic aspects of arithmetic. Teachers have dedicated additional teaching time to support pupils to address these gaps.

- All the subjects within the wider curriculum are being taught, although the time allocated to teaching Spanish has altered to provide additional lesson time to reading, writing and mathematics. You told us that you have introduced new topics to your weekly assemblies, to further support pupils' knowledge and awareness of certain aspects of the wider curriculum.
- You are providing remote education for pupils who are having to isolate from school. When individual pupils are isolating, this work consists of a pack of resources available both online and in printed packs. Where entire bubbles are isolating, teaching staff are providing additional opportunities to engage in 'live lessons'. You told us that all tasks done remotely are the same as those which had been planned for pupils attending school in person.

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 and the chief executive officer of the Pontefract Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Duncan
Her Majesty's Inspector