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Alison Anderson
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Dear Mrs Anderson

Ofsted visit to Buckden Church of England Primary Academy

Following my visit with Steve Mellors, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 10 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 deputy headteacher and the assistant 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:

- There were no year group 'bubbles' isolating at the time of the visit. At the start of the autumn term, the Reception class had to self-isolate for two weeks. A third of pupils have had to work from home for a period of time since the start of term, while they self-isolate and await COVID-19 test results.
- All pupils are studying their usual range of subjects. Leaders plan to return to the usual content for each subject earlier than summer term 2021. Pupils attend extra-curricular activities, such as art, rugby and football, in year group bubbles. Education visits have been postponed until further notice.
- For the first two weeks of the autumn term, staff focused on the teaching of the personal, social and health education curriculum, to allow pupils to consider how they were feeling and to express concerns they had.
- Teachers have assessed pupils' new starting points in phonics, English, mathematics and the wider curriculum subjects, by using a range of assessments such as questioning, quizzes and tests.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 whose phonics knowledge is not as strong as it was previously are receiving support to help them cover any missed learning. Across all years, staff are focusing on helping pupils to improve their reading. In writing, the focus is on pupils' ability to write at length for an extended period of time.
- In mathematics, teachers' checks show that pupils have remembered their learning from last year well in some topics, such as times tables. Teachers are

prioritising the revision of fractions in Years 4, 5 and 6. At the start of the autumn term, teachers prioritised the learning of place value.

- In the wider curriculum, staff are adjusting what they are teaching to include any knowledge pupils cannot remember or have misunderstood when the school was not fully open. Leaders have added more outdoor learning opportunities to their wider curriculum in order to prioritise pupils' well-being.
- Staff have selected particular aspects of the curriculum and tailored support to reflect the specific needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The focus is to plug the gaps in knowledge and skills.
- Leaders have provided training to improve the expertise of staff to deliver remote learning. Pupils who are self-isolating as a whole class can access lessons live. Those self-isolating as individuals receive work which is accessible from the school website, and which is similar to what is taught 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 of the Buckden Church of England Academy Trust (a single-academy trust), the director of education for the Diocese of Ely, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cambridgeshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop
Her Majesty's Inspector