

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



7 January 2021

Andrea Willis  
Headteacher  
Biddick Hall Infants' School  
Galsworthy Road  
South Shields  
Tyne and Wear  
NE34 9JD

Dear Mrs Willis

### **Ofsted remote visit to Biddick Hall Infants' School**

Following my remote visit with Tim Scargill-Knight, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 1 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. 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, the leader with responsibility for the curriculum, the attendance and relationships manager, the special educational needs coordinator and the leaders for art, computing and mathematics. 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:**

- Attendance is slightly higher than usual at this point in the year. A small number of pupils have had to learn from home for a period of time since the start of term.
- Pupils are studying their usual range of subjects, but leaders have made some adaptations because of the impact of COVID-19. For example, Year 2 design and technology work will now take place later in the year so that parents are able to celebrate this aspect of their children's work in school as usual. Leaders hope to return to the school's usual curriculum in summer 2021.
- Leaders' checks have shown that pupils' reading was affected by the school's partial closure due to COVID-19 restrictions. The curriculum has therefore been reorganised to teach content that was missed during the summer term. For example, Year 2 pupils now have an extra phonics session every day.
- In mathematics, leaders have made changes to the curriculum to help pupils catch up on missed learning. In Year 2, pupils are spending more time on multiplication, and in Year 1, pupils are focusing on addition and subtraction.

- Leaders also told us that they have made changes to routines for children in the early years. This is to provide more chances for pupils to apply the mathematical skills they missed because of COVID-19 restrictions.
- In the wider curriculum, all pupils are spending more time learning about information and communication technology, to help them learn remotely if necessary.
- Leaders have organised remote education so that all pupils are given a paper pack but can also access work digitally if they prefer. When whole 'bubbles' isolate, pupils can access videos and other resources to help them to practise their phonics, for example. School leaders have provided guidance for parents on how they can support their children to learn 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, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for South Tyneside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Vellensworth  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**