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Sara Royle
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Royle

Ofsted visit to Bassenthwaite Primary School

Following my visit with Naomi Taylor, 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 school leaders. 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, a very small number of pupils have spent a period of time studying from home.
- You explained that pupils are studying their usual range of subjects. This term you have allocated additional time for the teaching of English, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic education. You intend to return to the school's normal curriculum content before the summer term 2021.
- In September 2020, teachers checked on pupils' new starting points in reading. Following these checks, teachers are providing targeted support to a small number of younger pupils who have forgotten some of their phonic knowledge. Teachers are also giving older pupils more opportunities to read and to develop their comprehension skills.
- You told us that some pupils are unable to spell or use their knowledge of punctuation and grammar as accurately as they did prior to March 2020. Teachers are providing additional time to refresh pupils' knowledge of these aspects of writing.
- Teachers have also completed checks on pupils' learning in mathematics. They have found that some pupils have forgotten the number facts that they need to calculate quickly and accurately. Teachers are ensuring that pupils can practise their number bonds and multiplication tables frequently.
- In other subjects, such as art, teachers are adapting their curriculum plans to include the content that pupils have missed during the summer term. You have changed the order of topics in the computing curriculum to prioritise the teaching of online safety.

- For those pupils who are self-isolating, teachers set work in English, mathematics and other subjects. Leaders have invested in new equipment to support those pupils who are studying at home. Teachers are ensuring that pupils and their families are familiar with this way of working.

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 chief executive officer of the Keswick multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cumbria. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Garry White
Her Majesty's Inspector