

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



18 January 2021

Ian Bennett
Headteacher
Downshall Primary School
Meads Lane
Ilford
Essex
IG3 8UG

Dear Mr Bennett

Ofsted visit to Downshall Primary School

Following my visit with Mark Smith, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 9 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 safeguarding leader, the deputy headteacher, the leader responsible for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the leaders for English, mathematics, personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), religious education (RE) and early years. 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 the autumn term 2020, around one sixth of pupils have had to learn from home for a period of time.
- The content of some subjects has been adapted to allow more time for the teaching of English and mathematics. Leaders have prioritised the teaching of PSHE to help pupils settle back into school and physical education to improve pupils' health and fitness. You are hopeful that you can resume your usual curriculum by the summer term 2021.
- Leaders have carried out checks to establish pupils' new starting points in reading. Teachers have identified that younger pupils have not remembered some of the sounds and letters that they knew before March 2020. Older pupils have forgotten some of their reading comprehension skills. You aim to refresh their memories with more regular practice.
- Teachers have also noticed that pupils are not as well equipped to write for sustained periods of time. You explained that pupils are getting more opportunities to practise their writing skills in other subjects.

- Checks in mathematics have shown that pupils have forgotten some basic facts, such as times tables. Teachers are providing extra support to help pupils remember their previous learning.
- In other subjects, such as design and technology and RE, teachers have checked the learning that pupils have missed or forgotten. They have adapted subjects so that this learning can be included in future lessons and special thematic events.
- You have systems in place to deliver remote education. These include online resources as well as weekly learning packs that are sent home for pupils who do not have internet access. You told us that pupils learning from home receive daily reading, writing and mathematics tasks as well as activities that encompass all subjects of the wider curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Phil Garnham
Her Majesty's Inspector