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Deena Chetty
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Dear Mr Chetty

Ofsted visit to Downsell Primary School

Following my visit with Gary Rawlings, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 21 October 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 school business manager, the attendance officer, the mathematics leader, and the Year 3 and Year 5 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:

- The school reopened fully on 3 September 2020. All pupils are currently attending full time, apart from children in the Nursery, who attend part time as usual.
- Attendance since reopening is above the school's previous level for this time of year. Current travel restrictions have reduced the instances of absence caused by taking holidays in term time.
- Pupils are not currently studying music or French. These subjects are about to be reintroduced now teachers have adapted lessons and classrooms, so pupils can learn while remaining socially distanced and use learning equipment safely.
- Teachers have completed checks for gaps in pupils' reading skills since they returned to school. These revealed that many younger pupils are not confident in using phonics. Lesson times have been increased and extra support is being provided to help pupils catch up.
- In mathematics, teachers are devoting more time to helping pupils tackle word problems. On their return, pupils found it hard to remember the techniques they had previously been taught, to identify the important information in a problem.
- In other subjects, pupils have forgotten vocabulary specific to subjects which they were taught previously. Teachers are making sure pupils go back and recap the words they need to remember how to use. For example, in science,

Year 3 pupils are revisiting vocabulary about light and shadows that they originally covered in Year 2.

- Timetables and individual pupils' work packs are set up ready for remote learning should they be needed again. Teachers have been trained in the use of the school's remote learning platform and continue to expect pupils to use this now they are back at school. You have provided some equipment for home learning when families lack this and intend to extend the offer further in the coming weeks.

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 governors, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Waltham Forest. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector