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17 November 2020

Courtney Freese  
Headteacher  
The Willows Primary School  
Church Road  
Basildon  
Essex  
SS14 2EX

Dear Mr Freese

### **Ofsted visit to The Willows Primary School**

Following my visit with David Milligan, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 22 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 and the deputy headteacher who is also responsible for safeguarding. 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 (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:**

- On 3 September 2020, pupils in Years 1 to 6 returned to school full time. Reception children began school two weeks later. Prior to Reception children starting, parents visited the school and met the early years staff.
- Overall, attendance is the same as it would normally be at this time of year.
- Pupils are currently spending more time on personal, social, health and economic education. Teachers are focusing on online safety, relationships and how to treat each other well. Leaders have delayed the teaching of religious education and music until spring 2021.
- Leaders have identified that some pupils have not been reading as often as they usually would. Teachers are using every opportunity for pupils to practise their reading. There is also an increased focus on learning phonics in lessons for younger pupils.
- In mathematics, teachers are setting extra activities at the start of lessons and are giving pupils additional homework tasks to help them catch up with important learning they have missed.
- Staff have received training to be able to plan and deliver online learning if pupils need to learn at home in the future.

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, and the chief executive officer of the Berlesduna Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the

director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Liz Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**