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Louise Nealings
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Nealings

Ofsted visit to St Charles' RC Primary School

Following my visit with Gill Wild, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 1 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, your deputy headteacher and other teachers with responsibility for pastoral matters and remote learning. 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 opened to pupils in Years 1 to 6 on 8 September 2020. Children in the Nursery and Reception Years were admitted in the school's usual phased way across the first fortnight. Pupils are expected to attend full time.
- The level of attendance so far this term is in line with that seen normally for the time of year.
- Leaders explained that pupils are being taught the school's normal curriculum across all national curriculum subjects. In addition, teachers have been asked to integrate content into their lessons that the pupils missed during the period when schools were only open to some pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- You asked teachers to check what curriculum content pupils know and remember. Teachers have reported that pupils have not fallen too far behind, although they have identified larger gaps in phonics and early reading skills. To combat this, you are asking teachers to provide some extra phonics sessions and you are arranging one-to-one tuition for pupils who have further to catch up.
- You explained that teachers are re-visiting some aspects of mathematics that have not been learned securely, before teaching this year's normal content. You also explained that teachers are correcting some calculation methods that pupils have picked up that are not in line with the school's calculation policy.
- You told us that pupils are receiving the normal amount of teaching in wider curriculum subjects. Visits out of school to places of interest that would

normally support the planned curriculum are not going ahead, however. Extra time across the year has been earmarked for teaching content that pupils have missed in subjects such as science, history and geography.

- Leaders have set up a digital learning platform so that they can deliver education remotely, should they need to do so as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. You plan to offer a combination of live lessons, recorded lessons, access to resources and the facility to mark and comment on pupils' work.

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 director of education for the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector