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Michael Parker
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Dear Mr Parker

Ofsted visit to Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn

Following my visit with Elizabeth Stevens, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 8 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 with you and members of the senior leadership team, including the leader responsible for safeguarding. 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:

- You opened Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn to all pupils on 2 September 2020. All pupils are expected to attend full time.
- Pupils' current rate of attendance is better than it usually is at this time of the school year.
- You explained that pupils are studying the full range of subjects that they usually do. However, you described some adaptations that you have made to activities. For example, in physical education, you have replaced playing contact sports with games that develop individual ball skills. You explained that you will return to your usual curriculum by Christmas 2020.
- Reading has a high priority. Teachers have carried out checks to determine where pupils are in their reading. Support is in place to help pupils across the school, including in early years, to catch up with their reading where necessary.
- You told us that teachers are finding out about pupils' new starting points in mathematics. You note that pupils have forgotten some number facts, such as multiplication tables.

- In the wider curriculum, teachers have checked how much pupils can remember. You told us that most pupils' knowledge in subjects, such as history, geography and science, remains secure. A few pupils, however, have forgotten some of the vocabulary that they learned previously. Teachers are helping these pupils to recall and strengthen their knowledge before moving on to new learning.
- In early years, teachers are focusing on developing children's general readiness for learning.
- You described your plans to deliver remote education in the future, if it is needed. You said that you plan to use a mixture of online learning and paper-based work for pupils. You are investing in new hardware to enhance online learning.

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 Salford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Blackburn and Darwen. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Claire Cropper
Her Majesty's Inspector