

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Tracey Gibson
Headteacher
St Hild's Church of England School
King Oswy Drive
Hartlepool
TS24 9PB

Dear Mrs Gibson

Ofsted visit to St Hild's Church of England Voluntary Aided School

Following my visit with Christopher Pearce, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 13 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 senior leadership team and the senior leader responsible for safeguarding. I had a short telephone call with the chair of the interim executive board (IEB). 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:

- At the start of the academic year different year groups of pupils returned to school on a phased basis. All year groups had returned by 4 September 2020.
- Attendance has been below the school's normal attendance for this time of year. Leaders have put in place support for pupils and their families to encourage improvements in attendance. At the time of our visit you had one Year 7 class 'bubble' isolating.
- Leaders told us that pupils are studying their usual range of subjects. You have adjusted the teaching of some practical work; for example, in science there is greater use of video clips to demonstrate experiments.
- Teachers' assessments in all subjects have identified gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders have identified the need for work on pupils' well-being. They have allocated more time for teaching English, mathematics and personal, social, health and economic (PHSE) education.
- Year 10 and 11 pupils have in the main continued with their GCSE option choices. Year 11 pupils, with the exception of a small cohort, have moved from separate science to combined science.
- Leaders developed pupils' remote online learning during the last academic year. You explained how remote learning is supporting pupils to catch up with lost learning beyond the school day, and when 'bubbles' of pupils are working

at home while self-isolating. Leaders continue to seek ways to support pupils who do not have suitable access to the technology to enable 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 IEB, the director of education for the diocese of Durham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hartlepool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Reeves
Her Majesty's Inspector