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Carolyn Laws
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Dear Mrs Laws

Ofsted visit to St James' Catholic High School

Following my visit with Amanda Carter-Fraser, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 6 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, members of your senior leadership team, several curriculum leaders and the leader with responsibility 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:

- Following a staggered start, the school opened to all pupils on 14 September 2020. The timetable has been revised to minimise movement throughout the school day.
- Attendance is slightly below what is typical at this time of year. Leaders have shared risk assessments and reopening plans with parents to acquaint them with the measures taken to make the school 'COVID secure'.
- In Years 7 and 8, pupils are studying all the subjects that comprise the school's usual curriculum. Teachers have used assessment to identify gaps in knowledge and inform the order in which subject content is taught. Leaders are making decisions about the best way to address any 'lost learning' identified.
- Pupils are back to studying their full curriculum in Years 9 to 11. This term, teachers have planned to teach some of the content that could not be taught in the summer. These decisions are based on a review of the curriculum and leaders' analysis of learning gaps in all subjects.
- Many students from last year's Year 11 have joined the sixth form this September. Students are studying all their option subjects and other compulsory parts of the curriculum. This term, teachers have planned learning in the sixth form on the basis of their analysis of gaps in last year's Year 11 curriculum.
- Teachers are planning lessons and preparing resources for remote learning should a switch to this mode become necessary. It follows the school's existing curriculum supported by regular quizzes and online assessments. It is

based on the school's experience of developing digital learning in curriculum subjects during the summer.

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

Yours sincerely

Nasim Butt
Her Majesty's Inspector