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16 November 2020

Maria Coulthard  
Headteacher  
St Mary's Catholic Primary School  
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Blackburn  
Lancashire  
BB2 7HX

Dear Mrs Coulthard

### **Ofsted visit to St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit with Amanda Stringer, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 3 November 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. 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 all pupils on 3 September 2020. All pupils are expected to attend full time.
- Pupils' current attendance is higher than it was at the same time last year.
- You explained that all subjects in the national curriculum are being taught, apart from a modern foreign language. This to allow more time for the teaching of English and mathematics. You aim to return to the usual curriculum by the summer term 2021.
- You told us that teachers know the gaps that have emerged in pupils' reading since March 2020. You aim to help pupils catch up by giving more time for small-group work and individual help.
- Teachers' checks in mathematics identified that pupils needed extra time to rebuild their understanding of number and place value. Older pupils have spent more time than usual on number facts, particularly multiplication tables, to regain their mathematical fluency. Pupils are now following the usual mathematics curriculum. However, teachers are adapting planning to make sure that any missed learning is covered.
- In subjects other than English and mathematics, teachers have identified the learning that some pupils have missed or forgotten from the summer term. Teachers are amending their curriculum plans to include this learning in future activities.

- Teachers have developed their expertise in how to deliver remote education. You explained that staff are maintaining pupils' familiarity with this system by using it to set homework. Should it be needed, you believe that teachers are well placed to make further use of remote education using online and paper-based resources.

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 Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**