

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Paul Bacon
Headteacher
St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Rowden Hill
Chippenham
Wiltshire
SN15 2AH

Dear Mr Bacon

Ofsted remote visit to St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Following my remote visit with Marie Thomas, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 10 November, 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. Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, we made this visit remotely to reduce pressure on the school.

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 and the deputy headteacher. We did not speak to pupils.

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 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:

- Since September, a small number of pupils have had to work from home as they were self-isolating. However, no 'bubbles' of pupils have been sent home.
- At the beginning of the first term, leaders introduced a 'recovery curriculum' that prioritised the social and emotional aspects of learning, to enable pupils to settle back into school. During this period, teachers made informal checks on pupils' understanding in different subjects to see what learning they had missed. Leaders expect that pupils will be able to return to the normal curriculum by spring 2021.
- Children in the Reception Year and pupils in Years 1 and 2 are receiving extra phonics teaching to catch up on their early reading skills. Leaders have also made reading a priority in Years 3 to 6.
- Teachers found that some pupils are out of practice with handling numbers. These pupils are receiving extra help to restore their confidence and speed with basic operations such as addition and multiplication.
- Teachers are checking pupils' knowledge in other subjects at the start of each topic. They are modifying their plans as a result of these checks. For example, Year 3 pupils are learning about rocks and fossils in science as before, but with some adjustments to the teaching.

- Pupils who work from home can download learning materials from the school's website. Leaders are planning to expand this facility so that pupils self-isolating at home can follow a similar curriculum to those who are in school.

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 Clifton, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wiltshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector