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Catherine Walmsley
Principal
Ripley St Thomas Church of England Academy
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Lancashire
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Dear Mrs Walmsley

Ofsted visit to Ripley St Thomas Church of England Academy

Following my visit with Jonathan Smart, 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, the senior leadership team and the senior 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:

- Pupils in Year 7 and students in Year 12 returned to school on 2 September 2020. The school reopened to all remaining pupils on 3 September 2020. You expect all pupils, including students in the sixth form, to attend full time.
- Attendance is broadly in line with the school's usual attendance for this time of year.
- Pupils and students have returned to studying their full timetable of curriculum subjects, but some changes have been made to the order of the curriculum content for pupils in Years 7 and 8. For example, in music you have delayed the teaching of singing until later in the year. You intend to return to the usual curriculum content order by the summer term 2021.
- You explained to us that teachers are checking what pupils and students may have missed or forgotten since March 2020. Teachers are using this information to adapt the curriculum to help pupils and students to catch up. Staff are providing additional support to some younger pupils who have lost ground with their reading skills.
- Pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11, and students in the sixth form, continue to study all their examination subjects. Teachers are establishing where there are gaps in older pupils' learning. For example, a small number of pupils need support with their coursework.
- You have systems in place to deliver the curriculum remotely to pupils who are self-isolating. You told us that these resources align closely to the school's

usual curriculum. You explained to us that you have systems in place to check that pupils complete the work that is set.

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 chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of The Bay Learning Trust, the director of education for the diocese of Blackburn, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Linda Emmett
Her Majesty's Inspector