

30 November 2020

Sandra Jennings
Headteacher
St Nicholas' CofE Middle School
Main Street
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Worcestershire
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Dear Mrs Jennings

Ofsted remote visit to St Nicholas' CofE Middle School

Following my remote visit with Lesley Yates, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 17 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. 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 members of your leadership team. 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 reopening in September 2020, the school has closed for four days because of several cases of COVID-19. During this time, pupils were provided with home-based learning activities. In addition, a small number of pupils have self-isolated and worked at home at other times during this term.
- Pupils are studying their usual subjects, although aspects of physical education, music, food technology and science have been changed so that pupils do not share equipment. Leaders say that they are on track to return to the school's usual curriculum by summer term 2021.
- Staff have carried out formal assessments in English and mathematics. In other subjects, they have checked what pupils know during lessons and made changes to teaching where necessary. In English, for example, staff found that some pupils have got out of the habit of writing regularly. In response, teachers are focusing on punctuation, sentence structure and building up pupils' stamina for written tasks.
- In mathematics, staff report that pupils' confidence and recall of number facts and multiplication tables have declined. Currently, staff are providing catch-up sessions.
- Leaders told us that assessments of pupils' reading ability present a mixed picture. Some pupils have kept up very well, while others have fallen behind.

You have used some of the COVID-19 catch-up funding to buy extra reading books and to pay for additional learning support.

- This term, the school's usual after-school clubs and educational visits have been stopped. However, you explained that staff have found different ways to give pupils a range of opportunities at school. For example, pupils can join a 'virtual' school choir.
- You have invested in an online resource to support home learning for individuals and/or groups, as necessary. You told us that about two thirds of families can access online learning, so you provide paper-based resources as well. You aim to offer the school's usual range of subjects by using your own learning materials and by directing pupils to some national 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 chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Diocese of Worcester Multi-Academy Trust, the director of education for the diocese of Worcester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Worcestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye
Her Majesty's Inspector