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Lauren O'Connor
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs O'Connor

Ofsted remote visit to St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Following my remote visit with Clive Close, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 24 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, your deputy and the leaders of key stages 1 and 2, who are also the subject leads for English and mathematics. 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:

- A small number of pupils have had to work at home at times since the start of term.
- Teachers have checked pupils' new starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. You are concerned that pupils are furthest behind in mathematics. You expect that pupils will catch up quickly in reading.
- Leaders and teachers are using various strategies to address your concerns about mathematics. They have earmarked specific mathematics lessons both to develop pupils' understanding of concepts and to practise the mechanics of calculation.
- You have increased the time available for the teaching and learning of reading. You told us that COVID-19 delayed the school's introduction of a new phonics scheme, but this is now under way.
- The school is providing additional individual or small-group support in English and mathematics for some pupils.
- Pupils are studying the usual range of subjects. The timetable includes extra physical education. In the first weeks of term, teachers also gave more time to personal, social, health and economic education.
- There have been isolated cases of individual pupils being required to work at home. Teachers aim to provide tasks for such pupils that align with what is

being taught in school. Some teachers have used online videos to support pupils' learning, for example in phonics.

- The school uses the same online system that it uses for homework to set remote tasks. You explained how this system allows teachers, pupils, parents and carers to exchange messages about the intended learning. You told us that parents have a big role to play in supporting pupils who are working at home.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Dunn
Her Majesty's Inspector