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Siobhan Moran
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Moran

Ofsted remote visit to St Bernadette's Catholic School

Following my remote visit with Eve Morris, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 19 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, the senior leadership team and other staff. 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:

- At the time of the visit no 'bubbles' were self-isolating. Since September approximately one quarter of pupils have had to work from home.
- Leaders plan to return to the usual curriculum by the summer term 2021, including clubs and educational visits. All subjects are currently being taught, but with minor adjustments. For example, in music pupils are not currently singing.
- Teachers have been making checks in lessons to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge since they returned to school. Teachers have noticed that some pupils have fallen behind with their understanding of subject-specific vocabulary. You are focusing on developing pupils' vocabulary in a range of subjects, including geography.
- You told us that teachers are providing pupils with additional opportunities to use mathematical reasoning, particularly when teaching shape, space and measures. You are prioritising the teaching of number bonds and times tables in order to improve fluency.
- Teachers are focusing on developing pupils' resilience in all subjects.
- You are providing a mixture of paper-based packs and digital learning to support pupils who need to work at home. This work complements the work being taught in class. You told us that you are looking at ways to further help parents access and manage learning at home. For example, you have amended your lesson planning.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector