

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



9 December 2020

Manny Kelay  
Principal  
Thorns Collegiate Academy  
Stockwell Avenue  
Quarry Bank  
Brierley Hill  
West Midlands  
DY5 2NU

Dear Mr Kelay

### **Ofsted remote visit to Thorns Collegiate Academy**

Following my remote visit with Jonathan Leonard, 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, members of your senior leadership team and the chief executive officer of the Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust. 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:**

- On the day of the remote visit, all pupils in Years 7, 8 and 10 were working at home. More than 60% of pupils have worked from home at some time this term.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are studying all their usual subjects.
- Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are studying all their usual subjects except music. You intend to reintroduce music to their curriculum later this term.
- You told us that teachers are using their usual assessment procedures in lessons to check what pupils remember and understand. Teachers check pupils' prior knowledge at the start of each topic. In addition, pupils in Years 7 and 8 have taken tests in English, mathematics and science to help their teachers identify what they know and understand.
- Teachers' assessments have identified some areas where pupils appear to have fallen back in their learning. For example, in English, some pupils have found analytical writing more challenging than they did previously. Similarly, in mathematics, some pupils have forgotten how to manipulate negative numbers. Teachers are seeking to address these learning gaps before they introduce new content.
- You told us that you are putting more emphasis on supporting pupils' mental health and well-being within your personal, social, health and economic lessons this year.

- You have systems in place to provide remote education for pupils who are working from home. Teachers provide live, online lessons for year group 'bubbles' who are isolating. Individual pupils who are isolating have access to the materials their classmates are using in school. Some pupils find it difficult to access work online. You support these pupils by providing equipment and internet access or printed packs of work.

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 board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Dudley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**