

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



17 December 2020

Paul Boulton
Headteacher
Royal School for the Blind (Liverpool)
Church Road North
Wavertree
Liverpool
Merseyside
L15 6TQ

Dear Mr Boulton

Ofsted remote visit to Royal School for the Blind (Liverpool)

Following my remote visit with John Nixon, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 1 December 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 members of 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:

- Your leaders told us that approximately three quarters of pupils have had to self-isolate and study from home since the start of the autumn term. Approximately one third of pupils, from a mixture of year groups, have had to self-isolate on two separate occasions.
- Pupils in all year groups are studying their usual range of subjects. Leaders told us that, on the whole, pupils' education closely resembles what it would ordinarily look like.
- Leaders described minor changes to some subject curriculums. For example, some topics in computing are now taught over a longer period. This is so pupils do not miss full topics if they have to self-isolate. You have also made the decision to stop trips and visits temporarily.
- Leaders told us that staff have continued to assess pupils using established strategies. Assessments have shown staff that, overall, pupils' reading is where it usually is at this time of year.
- In contrast, the information is telling you that pupils are behind where they would usually be in mathematics. You plan to focus more intently on helping pupils to attain the mathematical targets in their individual education plans next term.
- Pupils have spent more time than usual learning art and design and personal, social, health and economic education since September 2020. Leaders told us they have done this to smooth pupils' transition back into full-time education.

- In the secondary phase and in the sixth form, pupils have continued to study their usual curriculums. Pupils have continued to work towards the same qualifications as they would ordinarily.
- Staff have worked closely with parents and carers to deliver remote education when it has been needed. You have focused on giving parents the knowledge they need to support their children in different areas. You told us that it has been easier to support pupils with their language and communication development than it has been in areas such as mathematics.
- You told us about several barriers that your pupils have faced in relation to remote education. For example, pupils' visual impairments have made it difficult for them to engage with visual 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 regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Liverpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Will Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector