

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



6 January 2021

Stephen Belbin
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Lancaster
Aldrens Lane
Lancaster
Lancashire
LA1 2DU

Dear Mr Belbin

Ofsted remote visit to St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Lancaster

Following my remote visit with Jackie Stillings, 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, the senior leadership team and the senior leader responsible for safeguarding. 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:

- All pupils have had to work at home for a period of time since the start of term. In all class 'bubbles', some individual pupils have had to spend further time working at home.
- Pupils are studying all the subjects from the primary national curriculum.
- You have changed the timetable to free up extra time for the teaching of mathematics and phonics. Teachers are not teaching some subjects, such as swimming. You plan for all pupils to study their usual curriculum by summer 2021.
- Teachers have identified which units of work in history were not taught in the summer term. They have assessed pupils' knowledge in this subject, so they can amend curriculum plans to help pupils to catch up.
- Teachers have assessed pupils' new starting points in reading. In Year 1 and Year 2, some pupils have forgotten how to combine letter sounds when reading unfamiliar words. Teachers are giving pupils daily practice to do this activity, so they can increase their fluency in reading.
- In Year 3, teachers have found that some pupils are less keen to read than they were in March 2020. You have purchased a range of new books which you believe will interest pupils and reignite their enthusiasm for reading.
- In mathematics, teachers have identified that pupils cannot easily remember some of the knowledge that they learned prior to March 2020. For instance,

some pupils in Year 6 have forgotten that the value of each digit in a given number depends on where it is in the number. Teachers are reteaching these key concepts and giving pupils lots of practice to help them to remember such important information.

- When pupils need to learn at home, many use their parents' mobile phone to access their teachers' instructions. Teachers link the planned work to pupils' work at school.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan
Her Majesty's Inspector