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14 December 2020

Jenna Ellison
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Miss Ellison

Ofsted remote visit to Blessed John Duckett Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my remote visit with Patricia Head, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 26 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 and two other leaders, including those 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:

- No groups of pupil 'bubbles' have needed to isolate. A small number of pupils have had to study from home for a few days since the start of term. No pupils have needed to study from home on more than one occasion.
- All pupils are studying their usual range of subjects, although you have made some adaptations to the curriculum. Additional catch-up work has been introduced and you have changed the order in which topics are taught in some subjects. Leaders explained that you intend to return to your usual curriculum by summer 2021, if not before.
- In phonics, reading and mathematics, you have tested pupils to establish their new starting points. These checks have told you that some pupils have forgotten previously taught content because of the period when schools were closed to most pupils due to the COVID-19 pandemic. You explained that teachers are addressing this in their normal lessons and in some cases through additional catch-up sessions with small groups of pupils.
- You have checked pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects across the wider curriculum. You told us that you are not intending to teach all the content that pupils missed in the summer term. However, you have

adapted the curriculum to make sure that pupils gain the skills they need to enable them to access future learning.

- When pupils need to learn from home, you provide them with work which is similar to the work being done by their peers in school. This is either accessed online or through paper-based learning packs. You explained that you are working closely with families to help pupils to make the most of these learning opportunities.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector