

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Karen Smyth
Headteacher
Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School
Honeysgreen Lane
Liverpool
Merseyside
L12 9HZ

Dear Ms Smyth

Ofsted visit to Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School

Following my visit with David Selby, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 9 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.

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 other leaders. We did not speak to pupils because of the protective measures in place.

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 (coronavirus) 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:

- Over one third of pupils, including all pupils in Year 11, have had to study from home since the start of term. Some of these pupils have self-isolated on two or more occasions. Far fewer pupils in Years 7 to 9 have studied from home than those in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils in all year groups are studying the usual range of subjects. You told us that you have made minor changes to the delivery of some practical subjects, such as design and technology and music, for pupils in Years 7 to 9. You are confident that you will fully return to the usual curriculum by the start of the summer term 2021.
- Staff have used a mixture of formal and informal strategies to assess how well pupils have remembered prior learning. Your information is telling you that younger pupils have more significant gaps in their knowledge than older pupils.
- Leaders told us that many pupils appear less confident in their recall and application of basic facts in mathematics and English. For example, some pupils have forgotten important information to do with Pythagoras' theorem. Pupils are also making more errors than normal with their spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Teachers are addressing these issues by spending longer than usual going over previously learned work. In some subjects, such as English, they have made changes to the order in which the curriculum is taught to some year groups. This is to rekindle pupils' passion for learning and to directly address some of the gaps in learning that have emerged.

- You deliver remote education using 'live' lessons. Pupils are given paper-based resources that support the content that is taught online. Leaders told us that you have tried to provide pupils with an experience that resembles face-to-face teaching as closely as possible.

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 Archdiocese of Liverpool, 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