

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
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08 January 2021

Caroline Vernon  
Headteacher  
Victoria Academy  
Devonshire Road  
Barrow-in-Furness  
Cumbria  
LA14 5NE

Dear Mrs Vernon

### **Ofsted remote visit to Victoria Academy**

Following my remote visit with John Donald, 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 you and the assistant headteacher. 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:**

- Since the start of term, around one quarter of the pupils in school have spent some time studying from home.
- Pupils are studying their usual range of subjects, but leaders have made some changes to the curriculum content. Teachers are allocating more time to the teaching of English and mathematics. You intend to return to the school's normal curriculum by summer term 2021.
- In reading, teachers' checks on pupils' new starting points have revealed that some pupils lack the stamina to read for a sustained period of time. Also, pupils' understanding of what they have read is not as strong as it was previously. Teachers are providing more opportunities for pupils to read and develop their comprehension skills.
- Teachers have checked on what pupils know and remember in mathematics from both before and during the spring and summer terms 2020. This has led teachers to revisit some aspects of prior learning, for example number bonds for younger pupils. Teachers are also allocating additional time to problem-solving.
- In subjects other than English and mathematics, teachers have identified the subject content that pupils missed during the summer term. Teachers are adapting their curriculum plans so that pupils can catch up with missed learning.

- Teachers provide those pupils studying at home with a timetable of subjects and activities to follow each day. When needed, staff teach remotely and make daily calls to help pupils with online and paper-based activities.

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 Furness Education Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cumbria. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**