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Frank Barratt
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Dear Mr Barratt

Ofsted remote visit to St John Fisher Primary, A Catholic Voluntary Academy

Following my remote visit with John Young, 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 and other senior leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, together with a number of middle leaders. 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:

- At the time of the visit, the year 1 and year 4 class 'bubbles' were both isolating. Almost half of all pupils have had to work from home at some point since the start of the autumn term.
- Pupils are studying all of the subjects that you would normally be covering at this time of year. However, you have dedicated more time than you usually would to teach reading, writing and mathematics. This is because you are aware that there are gaps in pupils' knowledge of these subjects as a result of the time when school was not fully open during the spring and summer terms 2020.
- Teachers have assessed pupils' abilities in reading and writing. These checks showed you that many pupils have additional gaps in their reading comprehension skills, following the time that school was not open to all pupils. You also discovered that for some pupils, the quality of their handwriting declined during that time. To help address this, you have allocated additional learning time to both reading and writing.
- Checks of pupils' knowledge in mathematics showed you that a number of younger children have not retained their understanding of some of the basic concepts of the number system. Assessments with older pupils showed gaps in

their knowledge of fractions and, for some, a lack of confidence in using the four operations. Teachers have dedicated additional teaching time to supporting pupils to address these gaps.

- All the subjects within the wider curriculum are being taught. As part of your wider strategy to reconnect pupils to school life, you have placed an emphasis on the teaching of physical education, music and French. You have done this to help provide every pupil with additional opportunities to be creative, and to better support their social, emotional and personal well-being.
- You are providing remote education for pupils who are having to isolate from school. When individual pupils are isolating, this work tends to be a mixture of paper-based and online materials. Where entire bubbles are isolating, teaching staff are providing additional pre-recorded lessons. You told us that the majority of tasks done remotely are the same as those which had been planned for pupils attending school in person.

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 accounting officer of the Hallam Schools' Partnership Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Hallam, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sheffield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Duncan
Her Majesty's Inspector