

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



30 October 2020

Sheena Sinclair
Headteacher
St Paul's Catholic Primary School
Wolviston Mill Lane
Billingham
TS22 5LU

Dear Mrs Sinclair

Ofsted visit to St Paul's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Belita Scott, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 6 October 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, your deputy headteacher and a curriculum leader. 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:

- After a staged opening beginning on 2 September, the school opened to all pupils on 7 September. All pupils are expected to attend full time.
- Attendance is similar to that of the same period last year.
- Pupils are studying the school's usual range of subjects. Leaders explained that teachers are continuing to implement the curriculum plans they have developed over the past year.
- Staff are developing pupils' routines and supporting their personal development in all years, to help them catch up on what they have missed.
- Teachers have used assessment to check pupils' phonics knowledge. In some cases, teachers have identified areas where pupils' knowledge is less secure than it was previously. You explained that additional support is being provided for pupils who may have fallen behind.
- Teachers have found that some pupils did not write regularly during the period when schools were only open to some pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions. Teachers are providing additional opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills.
- Teachers are continuing to use a scheme that supports the planning, teaching and assessment of the mathematics curriculum. Leaders said that this is helping teachers to identify additional support that pupils may need.
- Specialist staff teach music, physical education and French. In some cases, teachers are adapting group sizes and the use of space so that practical activities can take place safely.

- Teachers continue to develop ways to deliver the curriculum remotely. Leaders shared how they have developed an online system that allows teachers to provide work for pupils. Pupils can use this to share the work they have completed with their teachers. Additional learning content is available on the school website.

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 and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Stockton-on-Tees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector