

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



8 December 2020

Abigail Fielden
Headteacher
St Thomas C of E Primary School
Eskrick Street
Halliwell
Bolton
Lancashire
BL1 3JB

Dear Mrs Fielden

Ofsted remote visit to St Thomas C of E Primary School

Following my remote visit with Stephen Bentham, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 19 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 the senior leadership team. 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:

- All pupils, except children in the Nursery Year, have spent some time working from home since the start of term. At the time of this visit, the children in the Reception Year 'bubble' were self-isolating. Pupils in the Year 6 bubble have had to work from home on two separate occasions this term.
- Pupils are studying their usual range of subjects from the primary national curriculum.
- Teachers have undertaken checks to identify where pupils are up to in learning to read. These have shown that some pupils are not as far on with their phonics knowledge as they would usually be at this time of year. Extra support is in place to help these pupils catch up.
- Teachers have also assessed pupils' mathematical knowledge. They have found that most pupils are not too far behind where teachers would expect.
- In subjects other than English and mathematics, teachers are using curriculum plans to identify important knowledge that pupils missed during the summer term. They are using this information to deliver missed curriculum content alongside the usual subjects that pupils study.
- Pupils who are self-isolating are currently provided with a range of online and paper-based resources. The activities provided are similar to the learning that pupils in school are accessing.

- You told us that staff check that pupils can access the work that has been set and they provide feedback on the work that pupils complete.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Barlow
Her Majesty's Inspector