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30 November 2020

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Dear Mrs Howell

Ofsted remote visit to Sacred Heart Catholic High School

Following my remote visit with Gill Wild, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 17 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 to members of your senior leadership team. We also spoke to the senior leader responsible for safeguarding, to curriculum leaders for mathematics, English, geography and modern foreign languages and to the attendance manager. 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:

- Pupils are grouped into year group bubbles. So far this term, no year group bubbles have been sent home due to COVID-19. You told us that, since the start of term, a small proportion of pupils have had to work from home because they were self-isolating.
- Pupils are studying the usual range of subjects. You explained that, in some subjects, such as mathematics and geography, teachers have picked up from where teaching stopped in March 2020 and are teaching an accelerated curriculum. In other subjects, such as English and modern foreign languages, teachers are covering the normal curriculum content.
- Across all subjects, teachers are using different methods to check on pupils' starting points. You explained that some testing has been used to check the starting points of students in Year 13 and of pupils in Year 7. You told us that most assessments have involved methods such as 'low-stakes' tests and quizzes to check if pupils can recall the curriculum content they have been taught.
- Most curriculum leaders are adapting the curriculum they offer. The same approaches are being used across all year groups. You told us that teachers are combining some topics, shortening others and adding more opportunities

for pupils to revisit content. You also explained that you have placed more teaching resources online so that pupils can access them independently.

- The school is providing remote education for pupils. You explained that pupils who are self-isolating follow the same curriculum content as their peers in school. You also explained that you are ready to deliver education remotely to a year group bubble or the whole school, should this be required.
- The staff have all received training in remote learning. You told us that teachers monitor how well pupils are engaging with the work set and that they mark pupils' work and give feedback. You explained that pupils follow the same timetable of lessons that they would if they were in school.
- Leaders have made sure all pupils have an appropriate digital device, such as a laptop, so that they can access the curriculum remotely. You explained that the work being set is adapted for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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 Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust, the director of education for the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector