

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Phil Thomson
Headteacher
St John's Church of England Primary School
Rufford Road
Crossens
Southport
Merseyside
PR9 8JH

Dear Mr Thomson

Ofsted remote visit to St John's Church of England Primary School

Following my remote visit with John Tomlinson, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 2 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 another member of the senior leadership team, who is also responsible for safeguarding. 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 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 September 2020, almost half of all pupils have had to study from home for a period of time.
- All pupils are studying their usual range of subjects. You told us how you have adapted the content of the curriculum to help pupils with their return to school. You have put support in place for pupils who need to catch up on any learning that they have missed since March 2020.
- You said that teachers have checked what pupils already know in reading and mathematics, and in the wider curriculum. Teachers are using pupils' new starting points to plan the next steps in their learning.
- You told us that pupils were behind where they should have been in reading in September 2020. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are having additional phonics teaching sessions. Older pupils are practising reading a wider range of books with their teachers.
- In mathematics, some pupils had lost confidence and were finding it difficult to recall what they had learned before. Teachers are giving pupils more time to consolidate their learning in mathematics before moving on to new topics.

- You told us that in some subjects in the wider curriculum, pupils have large gaps in their knowledge. Teachers have produced new curriculum plans so that pupils can learn the core knowledge that they need.
- You explained that you plan to return to your usual curriculum when pupils' knowledge is secure. You said that this may take longer than this current school year.
- Teachers provide activities and resources to support pupils who are self-isolating. Pupils receive work through the school's online system or in a paper-based format. You explained that teachers have found it difficult to deliver some subjects remotely, for example art and other practical subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Cropper
Her Majesty's Inspector