

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



20 October 2020

Gavin Shortall
Headteacher
St James' C of E Primary School
Cromwell Range
Birch-in-Rusholme
Manchester
M14 6HW

Dear Mr Shortall

Ofsted visit to St James' C of E Primary School

Following my visit with Amanda Stringer, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 1 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 and your senior leadership team. 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:

- The school opened on 3 September 2020 for all pupils from the Reception Year to Year 6. There are new arrangements for the children starting in the Nursery class. All pupils are expected to attend full time.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly the same as it was this time last year.
- Pupils are being taught their usual curriculum, but you have prioritised the support for their physical and mental health. Some adaptations have been made to the music curriculum as you are not able to use your usual specialist support. You have plans in place for teachers to check on what pupils know and remember in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- In English, teachers have been unable to check the sounds that pupils know and remember in Years 1 and 2 as these year groups have only just returned to school following a period of isolation. Teachers have identified that many pupils in Years 3 to 6 are struggling with several aspects of reading such as comprehension. They have adapted the way that reading is taught to help pupils catch up.

- In mathematics, teachers have identified that pupils in Years 3 to 6 have forgotten how to apply their calculation knowledge to solve problems. You have adapted the way that you teach mathematics to help pupils practise their problem-solving skills.
- You told us that you have adapted the early years curriculum following checks that you made on children's starting points in the Nursery and Reception classes. As a result of these checks, you have prioritised children's personal, social and emotional development as well as their spoken language and communication skills.
- The leadership team has developed plans to be able to deliver the curriculum remotely. This will be through a combination of virtual teaching sessions and follow-up activities for pupils to complete online. Staff and pupils have received training on how to use the remote learning resources safely.

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 Manchester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Tomlinson
Her Majesty's Inspector