

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Helen Murden
Headteacher
St. Matthew's RC High School
Nuthurst Road
Moston
Manchester
M40 0EW

Dear Mrs Murden

Ofsted visit to St. Matthew's RC High School

Following my visit with Michael Pennington, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 13 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 with you and your senior leadership team, including the senior leader with responsibility 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 (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:

- You opened the school to pupils in Years 7 and 11 on 3 September 2020. Between 4 and 8 September 2020, pupils in Years 8, 9 and 10 returned one day at a time. All pupils were expected to attend from 8 September 2020. Currently, a small number of pupils are following part-time timetables to help them to reintegrate into school.
- Pupils' attendance is slightly below the usual rate of attendance for this time of year. Staff contact families regularly to provide ongoing support to get pupils back into school. The following 'bubbles' are self-isolating: all of Year 8, four class bubbles from Year 7, one class bubble from Year 9 and one class bubble from Year 11.
- Across all year groups, pupils are following the full range of subjects in your usual curriculum.
- In Years 7, 8 and 9, teachers have changed the order in which they deliver some topics. For example, in science, music and design and technology, you have removed some of the practical activities. You told us that these topics will be covered by summer term 2021.
- For pupils in Years 10 and 11, you have prioritised the use of specialist rooms. This is so that these pupils have access to specialist equipment and resources to enable them to study the full curriculum content.
- You have asked teachers to check how much pupils know and remember in all subjects. You have made time each morning for teachers to read with pupils

and to practise their numeracy skills. You are using personal, social, health and economic education lessons to support pupils' well-being.

- You offer remote education to all pupils who cannot attend school. You do this through online learning and paper-based study packs. You told us that these resources help pupils who are self-isolating to keep up with their peers.

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

Yours sincerely

Rachel Goodwin
Her Majesty's Inspector