

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



27 November 2020

Natalie Edwards
Acting Principal
St Mary's School and 6th Form College
Wrestwood Road
Bexhill on Sea
East Sussex
TN40 2LU

Dear Miss Edwards

Ofsted remote visit to St Mary's School and 6th Form College

Following my remote visit with Maxine McDonald-Taylor, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 10 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, the designated safeguarding lead, the special educational needs coordinator, the head of education, the consultant headteacher and the chair of trustees. 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:

- Just under one third of pupils have had to work at home for a limited period since September.
- Pupils of all ages are studying the usual range of subjects.
- Teachers have checked pupils' new starting points in reading, writing, mathematics, science and speaking and listening. Some pupils have had further specialist speech and language assessments. You found that the amount of previous learning that pupils have retained varies enormously.
- Across all subjects, in each lesson, teachers are making more time than they usually would to check what pupils know, remember and can do. They are using this information to adapt what is taught to meet pupils' needs.
- The school has introduced daily reading lessons in all key stages.
- Current restrictions mean that pupils are not benefiting from community activities intended to prompt them to use their mathematics skills, such as shopping. Where possible, teachers compensate by recreating opportunities in school.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11, and sixth-form college students, continue to study towards the school's usual range of accreditations. You have reordered different aspects of land-based studies to ensure that pupils can still have the practical experiences required.
- You emphasised to us the importance that leaders attach to working closely with parents and carers to support remote education. You are keen to take

account of the views of parents and pupils to personalise arrangements wherever possible.

- For pupils unable to attend, teachers aim to provide activities linked to the usual curriculum, which pupils can access remotely at a time which suits them and their families. You are considering using online 'live' teaching should one or more class 'bubbles' need to self-isolate. When working at home, you have ensured that pupils are still able to access their therapy sessions using video conferencing.

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, the chief executive officer of the Torfield and Saxon Mount Academy Trust (TASMAT), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Clive Dunn
Her Majesty's Inspector