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15 October 2020

Martin Bonner  
Headteacher  
St Thomas More Catholic School  
Tyne Crescent  
Bedford  
Bedfordshire  
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Dear Mr Bonner

### **Ofsted visit to St Thomas More Catholic School**

Following my visit with Al Mistrano, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 29 September 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 members of the senior leadership team, including the senior leader for safeguarding and a representative of the Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Academy Trust. 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 to all pupils on 10 September 2020. Pupils are attending full time.
- Attendance since the start of term is broadly in line with what is normal for this time of year. To encourage full attendance, you have shared with pupils and their families how you are following government guidance to reduce risk and provide a 'COVID-19-secure' environment. You are following your usual procedures to monitor and support pupils' attendance.
- All pupils are studying the full range of subjects that make up your usual curriculum. In physical education, music and drama, there have been some changes to the activities that teachers use to teach aspects of these subjects. You are not currently offering the range of extra-curricular activities and visits that would usually be available to pupils.
- In Year 8 and above, teachers have identified knowledge that pupils did not learn during the lockdown period. This information, alongside teachers' routine checks on pupils' learning, is being used to inform planning and support individual pupils. You have used a range of tests to assess where Year 7 pupils are in their learning, so that leaders can adapt the curriculum content.
- All pupils in Year 11 are continuing with the examination subjects that they were studying before the COVID-19 pandemic. This is also the case for students in Year 13.
- You and curriculum leaders are developing further your plans for remote learning, building on what you have learned from the period from March 2020. You will use

digital learning, including some live streaming of lessons, to teach the curriculum. Teachers have received some training in how to provide remote learning, and further training is scheduled.

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 strategic executive lead of Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Northampton, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bedford Borough. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Wilson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**