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11 November 2020

Dominic McKenna  
Principal  
St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy  
Little Chell Lane  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
ST6 6LZ

Dear Mr McKenna

### **Ofsted visit to St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy**

Following my visit with Heather Phillips, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 20 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, the vice principal, who is also the senior leader responsible for safeguarding, members of the senior leadership team and other staff. 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 5 September 2020. You expect all pupils to attend full time.
- Pupils' attendance is below the usual attendance for this time of year. You told us that you are working closely with some families to support attendance. At the time of the visit, some pupils in Year 8 and Year 9 were self-isolating at home.
- Pupils in all year groups are studying their normal subjects. Curriculum leaders told us that they had made some changes to the content of practical subjects in Years 7 to 9. They have made these changes because of the protective measures you have put in place. For example, in music, pupils are currently learning more music theory than usual.
- You have changed the order of some topics within the curriculum in Years 10 to 13. Curriculum leaders told us that they have made these changes so that pupils can study content that was missed during the period when schools were only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Since returning to school, teachers have been making checks in lessons to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. Teachers are using the information from these checks to help pupils in lessons. In addition, you told us that some pupils are receiving extra support outside of their normal lessons.
- You have developed a way for pupils to access learning when they are at home. As part of your approach, teachers are adding resources from their

lessons to an online platform. You told us that pupils who are currently self-isolating are using this system.

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 directors and the senior executive leader of the Newman Catholic Collegiate, the director of education for the Diocese of Birmingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Stoke-on-Trent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Stevens  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**