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20 April 2021

John Rooney  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Rooney

**Additional, remote monitoring inspection of The McAuley Catholic High School**

Following my remote inspection with Jayne Ashman, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 18 March 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to provide education to all pupils during the current circumstances.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 (2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for visiting schools while routine inspections remain temporarily suspended. It was additional to the usual monitoring process for schools that are judged to require improvement.

This monitoring inspection was carried out remotely. As such, the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would normally be the case during an on-site inspection. As a result, this letter provides a more limited level of assurance than our usual monitoring reports.

The inspection took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in February 2020.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) on the school, I am of the opinion that at this time:

**Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- provide clarity and support for staff about expectations to provide remote education if pupils are self-isolating due to COVID-19, while most pupils remain on site.

### **Context**

- Since the last inspection in February 2020, the deputy headteacher has retired. This post has not been replaced. There is a new vice-chair of governors.
- During the spring term, almost all pupils were educated at home. Almost half of pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) were educated on site and almost half of the pupils identified as vulnerable were educated on site.
- At the time of this inspection, almost all pupils were being educated at school. Most pupils with an EHC plan and most vulnerable pupils were also being educated at school. A small group of Year 11 pupils were continuing their education remotely because of COVID-19 restrictions.

### **Main findings**

- While providing a remote education, leaders have also continued planning for the future. During the spring term, leaders worked closely with pupils and families to ensure that pupils could access the curriculum remotely. They simplified the ways in which pupils accessed and handed in work. One parent commented that the 'teaching throughout lockdown has been exceptional'. At the same time, leaders were able to continue with plans, developed after the last inspection, to improve the curriculum for Years 7, 8 and 9. Leaders plan to introduce the new curriculum in September 2021.
- Leaders made sure that pupils were able to access their usual range of subjects remotely in the spring term. In practical subjects, such as art and design, leaders supplied materials such as paper, paints and colouring pencils to pupils. Changes were also made to the order in which subject topics were taught, with clay work being moved to the spring term. Now that all pupils have returned to school, leaders are considering how to cover any missed content. In English, for Year 11 pupils, leaders have adapted the teaching of important books so that pupils are able to gain important knowledge they need for the future.
- Pupils in Year 11 and Year 13 have continued to receive guidance to help them move into further education or training when they leave school. Pupils feel well supported by school leaders and teachers in helping them to make choices about what they will do next. As a result, the impact of COVID-19

restrictions has been minimised as pupils prepare for the next stage of their lives.

- For pupils who are not in school, teachers continue to offer remote education. However, this is now more difficult for teachers to manage while they are teaching pupils in school. Leaders do not have a clear plan for how they will manage this.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and vulnerable pupils have been well supported by the school over the course of the pandemic. Teachers have maintained regular contact with pupils with SEND. They have adapted the curriculum to prevent pupils from being overwhelmed. Many pupils with an EHC plan have been attending school and this has helped to make the full return to school go smoothly, particularly for anxious pupils. One Year 7 pupil commented that he had 'got his routine back' after returning to school.
- Leaders are using the rest of this term to help pupils to settle back into school life. They intend to use informal checks to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge before moving to more formal checks, particularly for those pupils in Years 11 and 13. Leader also intend to conduct checks on pupils' reading after Easter before putting in place any support needed.
- Governors know the school priorities. Minutes show that they receive updates about the ongoing work of leaders. The creation of a 'school critical incident team' in the last year has meant that there is oversight of the work the school is doing to address the challenges brought on by the pandemic. Governors are beginning to develop a more formal training programme to support work to challenge and support school leaders.
- Leaders value the support of a school improvement adviser and the diocesan strategic director of education. This support has been effective in helping governors provide robust challenge for school leaders. Leaders have narrowed the number of strategic priorities and have a clearer picture of those areas they need to address first. The work of leaders during the pandemic has led increasing numbers of parents to feel positive about the work of the school. Staff also feel very well supported by leaders. One commented, 'Staff well-being is taken seriously at McAuley.'

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, three governors, the school improvement adviser, the diocesan strategic director of education, pupils, teachers, curriculum leaders, leaders for Year 11, Year 7 and sixth form, the leader for safeguarding and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at minutes from governors' meetings. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 100 free-text responses, and 114 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Hallam, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Doncaster. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Vellensworth  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**