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Kate Holland
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Dear Miss Holland

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Mary and St Giles Church of England School

Following my remote inspection Shaun Jarvis, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 3 and 4 February 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 special measures.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, 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 was judged to require special measures at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in February 2019.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 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.

Context

- Since the previous monitoring inspection in June 2019, a new headteacher, five senior leaders and five teachers have joined the school. Six new governors have also started. The school is due to join the Inspiring Futures Through Learning multi-academy trust.
- During the autumn term, around two thirds of pupils were educated remotely for a period of time due to outbreaks of COVID-19 in Years 4 and 6.
- At the time of this inspection, around two thirds of pupils were being educated remotely. Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending school full time. Three quarters of pupils who are considered vulnerable were also attending the school.
- Leaders were not dealing with any significant levels of staff absence due to COVID-19 at the time of this inspection.

Main findings

- When the school partially closed in January, leaders acted quickly to provide remote teaching for those not attending school. Clear communication with families meant that laptops were provided to pupils who needed them to access their learning. Pupils who became vulnerable or struggled to complete the work remotely were swiftly invited into school so they could get the right support to continue their education.
- Pupils at home and in school study the same content, often joining each other for online lessons. In most subjects, staff follow the intended curriculum. Pupils download their work and submit it online for their teachers to check. Some lessons have been adapted, such as physical education (PE) and music, so that pupils at home do not require specialist equipment to complete their tasks.
- Prior to March 2020, leaders had focused on addressing significant gaps in pupils' English and mathematics knowledge. Staff had received useful training to help them provide this support for pupils and to deliver the newly designed curriculum in these subjects. Staff have successfully adapted the English and mathematics curriculum for online teaching because they have assessed pupils accurately and use this information to build on pupils' prior knowledge.
- Leaders used time over the summer term 2020 to review and redesign the remaining areas of the curriculum. Plans now match the requirements of the national curriculum more closely and staff are quickly getting to grips with the new content they need to teach. For instance, staff have been trained in the new computing curriculum, which helps pupils to develop an increasingly sophisticated understanding of online safety and coding. However, this work is at an early stage in history and geography. The subject leaders have not

yet received the training they need to review, improve and support others in delivering these subjects.

- All pupils in Reception and key stage 1 receive daily phonics teaching and those in school read to an adult every day. Initially, pupils working remotely were unable to practise reading because they had limited access to the right books. Leaders have now provided online reading resources that pupils can access easily at home. Staff check that younger pupils' reading is improving through listening to them during weekly phone calls home. Older pupils continue to read texts remotely through online books and listen to recorded stories read by their teachers. However, leaders have not yet precisely set out what texts pupils will read and when during their time in school. This means that pupils do not always broaden their knowledge of writing styles.
- The majority of pupils with SEND are attending the school. These pupils work with staff who know them well and set tasks that help these pupils to meet their targets. Close links between support staff, the pupil welfare team and families ensure that vulnerable pupils and those with SEND get additional support when they need it, whether in school or working remotely.
- Governors have worked hard to ensure that the school continues to provide education during this period. The new governors have provided additional expertise and experience. This has helped the governing body to check that the school provides places for vulnerable and keyworker children that need them and that remote education is accessible for others. This added capacity has also allowed other members of the governing body to maintain their focus on the school's imminent move to academy status.
- The school has received significant support from the Inspiring Futures Through Learning multi-academy trust. Training has enabled staff to improve the curriculum and provided support so they can deliver this online. The local authority and diocese continue to provide accurate and evaluative reports to governors which help them to check that leaders' actions are having the intended effect.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, five senior leaders, three members of staff and four governors, including the chair, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. Inspectors met with officers from the local authority and the Inspiring Futures Through Learning multi-academy trust to evaluate the external support provided to the school.

Inspectors also examined the school's curriculum plans and viewed some samples of learning that is being provided remotely. Inspectors took into account the views of

87 parents and 39 staff through the Ofsted online surveys. They talked to pupils in key stages 1 and 2 about their current experiences in school.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Lambert
Her Majesty's Inspector