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Claire Collett
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Dear Mrs Collett

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Swineshead St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Steve Varnam, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 27 and 28 January 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.

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 has received three successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in March 2018.

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.

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

- develop staff expertise in providing prompt and helpful feedback to pupils who are learning remotely, to help them improve their work
- refine existing curriculum plans to identify more precisely what pupils need to know and in what order.

Context

- A small number of pupils had to learn at home during the autumn term 2020, including one 'bubble' of Year 3 pupils.
- Approximately two thirds of pupils are currently learning at home. The majority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and all vulnerable pupils, are attending on site.
- Currently, a small proportion of staff are absent due to COVID-19. Leaders are covering their roles by deploying staff from across the federation.

Main findings

- Leaders and governors are ambitious for all pupils and are committed to providing education at this time. They have ensured that effective systems are in place to deliver the school's usual curriculum, whether pupils are learning on site or at home.
- Before schools partially closed on 23 March 2020, leaders had reviewed and revised the school's curriculum in all subjects. Subject leaders have set out the skills they want pupils to gain, and when. However, these plans do not set out precisely enough what pupils need to know to develop the intended skills.
- Staff are strongly committed to delivering education remotely. They have adapted their teaching quickly and effectively to the current circumstances. However, staff lack confidence in how to give meaningful feedback to pupils who are learning remotely.
- Staff have adapted some practical areas of the curriculum so that pupils experience the same activities at home as those learning in school. For example, pupils use pots and pans as percussion instruments in music lessons. In science, pupils at home learn about electrical circuits by means of online demonstrations. Pupils appreciate this, and some told us that, 'It feels just like you are there in school.'
- Leaders have ensured that providing education for vulnerable pupils is a priority. This includes the offer of electronic devices where needed, as well as any other resources pupils require. Staff keep in regular contact with these pupils to make sure they are safe and well.

- In reading, staff in the early years and key stage 1 provide extra daily phonics sessions. Pupils have access to books that are carefully matched to their phonic knowledge. Older pupils who are in the early stages of reading receive additional support. Staff encourage pupils of all ages to read for pleasure, for example by sending links to a wide range of electronic books to be read at home.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works effectively with staff to ensure that pupils with SEND receive education that is matched to their needs. Pupils with SEND receive additional help with reading where needed, whether they are learning on site or at home. Staff have adapted the curriculum for pupils with SEND and make regular checks on how well they are doing. For example, staff run 'catch the bus' sessions in school and remotely to help pupils address misconceptions that may have arisen during lessons.
- Governors continue to fulfil their duties and stay involved with the school. They have quickly adapted to the use of remote communication systems. They have been proactive in offering support for leaders and are mindful of staff workload and well-being. Governors request regular reports about the provision for vulnerable pupils and all others who are learning remotely at this time.
- The local authority and other partners, such as the diocese and the Connect Teaching School Alliance, provide effective support for the school. For example, middle leaders have had access to coaching and training. Staff have also benefited from the support of colleagues within the Emmaus Federation.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school, the SENCo, curriculum leaders, teachers and a group of pupils. We also met with a group of governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We reviewed minutes of governing body meetings and the 26 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View.

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

Yours sincerely

Christine Watkins
Her Majesty's Inspector