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Karen Salter
Head of School
Holy Cross Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Salter

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Dale Burr, 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 two successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in October 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

- The school shares an executive headteacher with two local primary schools. Since September 2020, three new phase leaders and four new governors were appointed.
- During the autumn term 2020, approximately one third of pupils had to be educated remotely. One 'bubble' in Year 3 needed to self-isolate for four days.
- At the time of this inspection, about three quarters of pupils were being educated at home. Approximately one half of pupils who are vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are attending on site.
- Currently, approximately 10% of staff are absent due to COVID-19 restrictions. Leaders ensure that lessons can continue for pupils by redeploying staff from elsewhere in the school. The executive headteacher was absent for this inspection.

Main findings

- You and your team have made a positive start to provide education in the current circumstances. By working closely with the school community, all are clear that on site and remote education is available for pupils. Pupils know that teachers expect them to follow a similar timetable to their friends in school when working remotely at home. There are clear expectations about the completion of work.
- Pupils welcome the feedback they get from teachers but prefer the more immediate feedback they receive when in school. Pupils have work to complete daily in English, reading and mathematics. Other subjects, for example, science, religious education and history, are timetabled weekly. Pupils demonstrate high levels of engagement regardless of how they are accessing education.
- Following the previous inspection, you and your team acted swiftly and with determination, to overhaul the curriculum. A clear structure is now in place for pupils to build their knowledge and skills year on year. You had hoped to have the school's revised curriculum fully up and running by now, but this has been delayed due to the COVID-19 restrictions. You are confident that the curriculum will be back on track by the summer term 2021.
- You continue to adapt the school's curriculum in light of your evaluation. For example, in some subjects, teachers are revisiting prior content to ensure that pupils can better remember key information. In mathematics, teachers are prioritising pupils' calculation strategies. Pupils have opportunities to reflect and develop spiritually in the online 'prayer room' in religious

education. You recognise that new subject leaders are at the early stages of checking how well the pupils are learning in each subject.

- There is a clear focus on the teaching of reading across the school. You have identified that children in Reception are significantly behind in reading and communication. Recent training is developing teachers' expertise and confidence in the teaching of reading. Books for younger pupils are now better matched to the letters and sounds pupils are learning. Pupils can take these books home. You have appropriate plans in place to provide support for pupils working at home through live daily phonics lessons.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has been reviewing systems that support vulnerable pupils and those with SEND. The SENCo works alongside teachers to ensure that pupils with SEND receive work which is tailored to meet their individual needs. There is a strong focus on early reading. The SENCo continues to work in partnership with some agencies, such as the educational psychologist, to get the right level of support for pupils.
- Governors are holding you and your leaders to account for the quality of education provided. While they are mindful of the delays caused by the pandemic, they continue in their work to assure themselves that the best possible education is being provided for pupils. Governors have a particular focus on the educational provision for vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEND. They hold regular discussions with leaders and check curriculum plans for pupils.
- You, and your governors, welcome the external support from the new school improvement partner. Your work together is having a positive impact on developing the effectiveness of leadership in the school. Specialist teachers from the local English hub help to ensure that staff have the expertise to teach early reading.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the head of school, senior leaders, staff, governors and the school improvement partner to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. We also looked at samples of work online and met with pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall
Her Majesty's Inspector