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Rebecca Unsworth  
Headteacher  
St Stephen and All Martyrs' CofE School, Lever Bridge  
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Dear Mrs Unsworth

**Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Stephen and All Martyrs' CofE School, Lever Bridge**

Following my remote inspection with Claire Cropper, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 27-28 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 May 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

- Several staff have left the school since the previous inspection. Two new teachers have been appointed. The joint education board that was supporting the work of the governing body concluded its role in summer 2019.
- In the autumn term 2020, approximately one half of the pupils experienced remote education for a short period of time because of COVID-19. This included pupils in Year 2, Year 3 and Year 6.
- At the time of this inspection, all vulnerable pupils eligible for a place at school were attending, as were all pupils who have an education, health and care plan. Two thirds of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were also attending the school.
- At the time of this inspection, leaders were not dealing with significant staffing issues and no staff were absent from work because of COVID-19.

## Main findings

- Since the previous inspection, you and the leadership team have steadily improved the work of the school. For instance, staff now give pupils better tasks to develop their mathematical knowledge. Pupils are now able to use this knowledge to reason and to solve problems. Everyone with whom we spoke to during this inspection told us that the work of the school has improved since you were appointed as headteacher.
- Over the past year, leaders' work to improve the curriculum has continued successfully. This is alongside adapting safety measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 and managing some changes of staffing. For example, leaders and staff amended the curriculum appropriately following the first national lockdown to help pupils begin to catch up with missed learning.
- Parents and carers are delighted with the regular newsletters and information that you send to them. Parents are pleased with the quality of learning that teachers set for pupils to complete at home.
- Since the previous inspection, you made certain that leaders, teachers and teaching assistants received training about the teaching of reading. Leaders' investment in new and high-quality books for the school library is paying dividends. Pupils are keen to visit. In all classes at the school, including the Reception class, teachers read stories to pupils daily. Pupils at home can watch a video recording of the story at a time that suits their family. This activity increases pupils' enjoyment as they listen to the teacher model story telling.

- Teachers successfully help pupils, including those who are vulnerable, to learn and practise their phonic knowledge. Teachers guide pupils who are learning at home to the online phonics videos which match the sounds and letters they know and need to practise. Pupils also revisit their learning by using live video links with their class teacher. Pupils attending the school, including vulnerable pupils, have their usual phonics teaching in groups. Teachers include extra opportunities for pupils to practise their phonic knowledge, when needed.
- Teachers feel valued and well supported by leaders in their work. Some of your plans to improve the curriculum in art and design and French have been delayed. You are exploring a variety of ways for staff to access relevant training and support to increase their subject knowledge.
- Leaders prepared pupils and staff in advance for the changes due to the third national lockdown. For instance, pupils were shown how to send their work to teachers on the internet and how to participate in 'live' lessons online. Staff assess the learning that pupils complete at home, including through discussion, quizzes and reviewing submitted work. You are now exploring how to assess this style of learning more effectively.
- The coordinator for SEND gives support to staff and parents where this is needed to ensure that pupils with SEND are able to access their learning. She makes sure that all teachers keep a close check on the learning and needs of pupils with SEND in their classes. This ensures that all pupils learn the same curriculum as one another.
- Governors have much better oversight of the work of the school than at the time of the previous inspection. Governors use their wide range of skills when they challenge and support the school. They ask helpful questions of leaders. For example, governors explore the improvements to the curriculum and check how staff will meet the needs of vulnerable pupils who are working at school as well all other pupils who are learning at home.
- The improvement of governance is a direct result of the external support that the school has received, from the local authority and the Diocese of Manchester. The work of leaders has got better. Advice from the local authority has helped to ensure that middle leaders learn from the work of national subject associations.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other leaders, including governors, and several parents, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

Inspectors also checked examples of work set by teachers for pupils to complete at home, recordings of teachers holding video calls with their classes, examples of

online videos that staff ask pupils to watch, videos of staff teaching phonics and reading stories and examples of pupils' work submitted to the school on the internet. Inspectors reviewed parental responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire. They also checked some school documents, including minutes of meetings by the governing body.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**