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Michael Burns
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Dear Mr Burns

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Patrick's Catholic College

Following my remote inspection with Sarah Hubbard, 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 May 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.

Context

- A head of school was appointed in January 2020. In September 2020, the headteacher became executive headteacher, with additional responsibility for another school in the trust. A senior leader has been appointed with responsibility for vulnerable pupils. Four new staff have joined the English department, including a new curriculum leader. An art teacher has also been appointed. Subject directors for the trust have been appointed in science and languages. These directors also teach at the school.
- In the autumn term 2020, two year group bubbles were educated from home in the week before half term. In November 2020, a higher proportion of pupils had to be educated from home, particularly pupils in Year 9.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately one in 12 pupils were being educated on site. One in four vulnerable pupils were being educated on site. Approximately one in three pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending on site.

Main findings

- Leaders are working closely with pupils and families to make sure that pupils can benefit from a broad curriculum. Leaders have checked that pupils have access to technology and other resources at home and at school. Leaders have decided to deliver a daily timetable of 'live' lessons. They feel this gives pupils a routine and helps teachers to check that pupils are taking part.
- In autumn 2020, leaders introduced a 'recovery curriculum' to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders have introduced one-to-one tuition to give pupils individual support and to help them to catch up.
- Leaders are continuing to work with teachers to improve the quality of remote learning. They check pupils' attendance at live learning sessions. Leaders also check how well pupils take part in remote education. This includes checking the questions pupils ask and the work pupils submit. The pupils we talked to said the quality of remote learning had improved since January because of the changes teachers had made. Pupils felt remote learning was less effective in some practical subjects.
- Teachers talked to Year 11 pupils before their return in September to check what they had learned in their chosen courses. Teachers then adapted their teaching to strengthen pupils' understanding of crucial content. Pupils are continuing to revise and study their chosen subjects through the daily lessons. Leaders are checking that pupils are gaining knowledge across subjects. Leaders are also providing pupils with guidance on courses and careers to help them to plan their next steps.

- Leaders are beginning to take extra steps to support pupils who need help with reading. They have purchased new books to support reading for pleasure. Leaders are working to build pupils' vocabulary across subjects. They are planning to use phonics-based approaches to provide pupils with extra help. The timing of some of these initiatives has been delayed because of the impact of COVID-19.
- Senior leaders are working closely with staff to help pupils with SEND get the support they need. Senior trust leaders have produced guidance for all staff. This is helping staff to adapt the curriculum, remotely and on site, to meet pupils' needs. Your team makes regular calls to check how pupils with SEND are responding to remote education and to provide support they may need.
- Leaders keep a close eye on the well-being of vulnerable pupils. They hold regular meetings to check the welfare of these pupils. They also review the progress they are making in the curriculum. Leaders make telephone calls and home visits to check that pupils are receiving the help they need.
- Governors meet regularly to check leaders' actions to provide education. Governors check arrangements to support pupils with SEND, at home and at school. They hold discussions with leaders to check pupils' access to remote education. They are particularly focused on checking the support provided for vulnerable pupils. They are assuring themselves that pupils are receiving an education in the current context.
- Subject directors are working with staff to develop the curriculum. They show staff how plans can be carried out in the classroom and remotely. They demonstrate teaching methods and the use of resources. This training is building staff confidence and expertise. Trust leaders continue to evaluate the quality of education. The trust has also commissioned external partners to check the quality of the curriculum in science.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with senior leaders to discuss actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. We talked to senior members of the trust, including the chief executive officer. We also talked to curriculum leaders and school staff. We held meetings with members of the governing body, including the chair. We talked to groups of pupils who were attending school.

We looked at examples of remote education and activities to support pupils' reading. We also looked at curriculum plans and examples of pupils' work. We considered 45 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and five free-text responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Nicholas Postgate Catholic Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Middlesbrough, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Stockton-on-Tees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector