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25 February 2021

Helen Darrell  
Headteacher  
St Paul's Church of England VA Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Darrell

**Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Paul's C of E VA Primary School**

Following my remote inspection with Hannah Stoten, 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 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 June 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

- You joined the school in January 2019 following a period when the school was led by two part-time interim headteachers. The deputy headteacher took up her post in September 2019. There have been a number of changes to the governing body. The chair of governors has been in post since September 2019, having previously been vice-chair.
- Around a third of pupils were educated remotely at some point during the autumn term 2020. These pupils were spread throughout the school, with no classes more affected than others.
- Currently, around one in six of the school's pupils are being educated in school. Approximately two thirds of these pupils are children of key workers, the remainder being vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

## Main findings

- You have taken appropriate action to provide education in the current circumstances. You have adopted a suitable online system and ensured that everyone can access it. Prior to the current national lockdown, leaders checked whether all pupils had access to a suitable device to take part in online learning. As soon as the current restrictions were announced, the school loaned laptops to identified pupils to enable them to learn remotely.
- Prior to COVID-19 restrictions, improving the quality of the curriculum had been the school's main focus. The impact of this work is clear. The content of the school's curriculum is now well thought-out, and care has been taken in deciding when different aspects of each subject should be taught. You have identified specific approaches to teaching reading, writing and mathematics, all of which focus on teaching content methodically, step by step.
- Despite the challenges that managing COVID-19 has presented, leaders, governors and staff have ensured that these improvements have been maintained and built on. Everyone is determined to make the current period of remote education as effective as possible. Leaders and staff share a determination to continue to deliver the school's normal curriculum as far as possible, albeit remotely. Many parents commented on how much better the curriculum is being delivered during the current national lockdown compared with the first one.
- The school is continuing to give reading a high focus. Teachers ensure that pupils have access to books, including online books. They have set up a book exchange system so that parents can safely come to the school's reception to swap their child's reading book for another. Teachers in Reception and key stage 1 teach phonics to their classes daily.

- Around a sixth of pupils are currently being educated in school. These pupils work in small 'bubbles' and are helped to access the curriculum by support staff and school leaders. The curriculum is delivered in the same way to pupils in school as it is to those who are learning at home.
- Just over half of pupils with SEND are being educated in school. You have offered places in school to all pupils with SEND, but some families have chosen not to take up this offer at this point. Leaders and staff ensure that they have regular contact with the parents of pupils with SEND who are not in school so that they can provide the educational and other support that is needed.
- The governing body has become increasingly effective at holding the school to account since the previous full inspection. Governors have a range of educational and other backgrounds, and this gives the governing body the skills and knowledge it needs. Governors have continued to have high expectations for the school throughout the pandemic. They are frustrated that the COVID-19 restrictions have meant that the school's new curriculum could not be delivered exactly as intended. However, they have focused well on checking that the curriculum is being delivered as closely as possible to what was originally planned.
- The local authority has worked closely with the school since the previous inspection and has supported it well. For example, it set up an improvement group that met regularly to ensure that the school was well governed. It is a mark of how far the school has come that the local authority no longer considers this group to be necessary as the governing body is now able to fulfil this role without support.
- The local authority provides you with support as and when you require it. You know that support is only ever a phone call away. Equally, the local authority supports you in keeping your focus firmly on school improvement. For example, you have looked together at the quality of the school's remote education and how well pupils are working through the curriculum.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance, and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. We looked at school documents, particularly those to do with the curriculum, and examples of pupils' work. We observed pupils reading to their teachers and looked at examples of lessons that were delivered online.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Ely, the regional schools commissioner and the director of

children's services for Cambridgeshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**