

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



1 March 2021

Lisa Marshall
Executive Headteacher
St Monica Primary School
Bay Road
Sholing
Southampton
Hampshire
SO19 8EZ

Dear Mrs Marshall

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Monica Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Hanna Miller, 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 have serious weaknesses.

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 have serious weaknesses at its previous section 5 inspection. 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.

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

- curriculum content is carefully chosen and sequenced in all subject areas, taking account of pupils' previous learning
- pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read are monitored closely, including when working remotely, so that they do not fall further behind.

Context

- A new executive headteacher from the Inspire Leadership Partnership (ILP) has been leading the school since September 2020. Previous interim leaders left the school in the summer of 2020. Over time, there has been a high turnover of staff. An interim executive board (IEB) was put in place in October 2020.
- The whole of Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 were educated remotely for two weeks in the autumn term, when they were required to isolate.
- Just under one third of pupils are currently being educated on site. The majority of these pupils are children of key workers. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make up around one quarter of pupils currently attending school.
- Leaders have covered the small number of long-term staff absences that are due to COVID-19 by using other staff flexibly. Leaders have ensured that this has not affected pupils' education.

Main findings

- Despite the challenges of the pandemic, leaders are taking appropriate steps towards making the improvements necessary for the school. New leaders have quickly gained the confidence of staff and parents. Both parents and staff are much more positive about the school than at the time of the previous inspection.
- Leaders are currently developing the curriculum. As a result, some subjects are better planned and sequenced than others. For example, in mathematics teachers are planning carefully to build on what pupils already know to help them make progress. In some subjects, such as physical education and modern foreign languages, curriculum plans are at a much earlier stage of development. Leaders are not always aware of what pupils have learned and remembered in the past. This means leaders are not yet using this information to fully plan the curriculum.
- The vast majority of pupils who are accessing education remotely are learning the same as their peers in school. Pupils are able to get help and support

when needed via chat and video from their teachers. Teachers are checking the work that pupils are completing at home, especially in English and mathematics. They are using this information to plan what to teach next.

- Teachers have made sensible choices about what they teach at the moment. For example, teachers decided not to teach fractions in mathematics as they believe that pupils will benefit from the support and resources available when they are back in school.
- Current leaders have prioritised reading since they arrived. For example, they have developed the library and encouraged teachers to read with their class every day. Leaders have purchased phonically decodable books for pupils who are at any early stage of learning to read. Leaders have also provided training for all staff in the teaching of phonics. However, it is not yet possible to see the full impact of these initiatives and how they are helping those pupils who have fallen behind over time to catch up. Leaders recognise that there is more that could be done, including during the current lockdown, to support these pupils to learn to read.
- Leaders and staff are very aware of pupils and families who may be vulnerable for a variety of reasons. In addition to the weekly contact that all pupils working at home currently receive, vulnerable families receive additional welfare calls and support. For example, pupils who are struggling with or are unable to access online learning receive paper materials instead. Dedicated staff also work well with other agencies to ensure that families are well supported in a variety of ways during these difficult times.
- There have been changes to the leadership of provision for pupils with SEND. Leaders recognise that not all pupils with SEND currently receive the support and challenge they deserve. Leaders are encouraging teachers to take more responsibility for the progress these pupils make. However, there are some examples of teachers already adapting remote learning to meet the needs of pupils with SEND well.
- The IEB quickly got to grips with ensuring that the safety and well-being of pupils were prioritised. Parents who completed our survey recognise that this has been done successfully. Members of the IEB are focused both on the improvements that need to be made immediately and also on the long-term future of the school. Members of the IEB are drawing on their experience to strongly hold leaders to account for the necessary improvements to the school.
- Since September 2020, the local authority has commissioned leadership support for the school from the ILP. The local authority aimed to provide the school with stability because the ILP are the preferred sponsor for the school when it becomes an academy. Leaders have commissioned support from the

local English hub and a local special school. This is to provide professional development for staff to help them develop a stronger curriculum.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the executive headteacher, deputy headteacher and other school leaders. We also met remotely with the chief executive officer of ILP, the chair of the IEB and a representative from Southampton City Council. These meetings allowed inspectors to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also spoke to a small group of Year 6 pupils remotely and saw examples of teachers' planning, recorded remote education and pupils' work. We considered 41 responses to the confidential staff survey and 60 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the IEB, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Southampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector