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1 March 2021

Naomi Wood  
Headteacher  
Middleton St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Moor Flatts Road  
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LS10 3SW

Dear Mrs Wood

**Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Middleton St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my remote inspection with Chris Pearce, 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in September 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

- In April 2020, two assistant headteachers were appointed as deputy headteachers. Governors also appointed a new curriculum leader. Eight new governors have joined the governing body since the last monitoring inspection. Two of these are associate governors.
- All pupils, except Year 3, had to work from home during the autumn term for one week. Pupils in Year 6 worked at home for two weeks.
- Less than half of all pupils are being educated in school now. Most vulnerable pupils have been offered places. Half of those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are working at home, and half in school.
- At the time of this inspection, three staff were self-isolating due to COVID-19.

## Main findings

- Leaders reviewed and rewrote the school's curriculum plans recently. All staff have accessed training on the new curriculum content. The new remote curriculum plans are working more effectively for pupils in Years 1 and 2. This is because their teachers assess pupils' learning quickly. They give feedback to pupils that helps them make progress. Leaders report that pupils in Years 1 and 2 have fewer gaps in their learning than pupils in other year groups.
- Leaders have ensured that all pupils who are working at home have access to an electronic device, such as a laptop or iPad, and wi-fi. Leaders are determined that no pupil should be disadvantaged by a lack of access to learning.
- Leaders have improved the way that phonics is taught. For example, leaders make sure that all teachers stick to the phonics programme. Teachers give books to pupils that match the sounds they know. This is increasing pupils' confidence and enjoyment when they are reading. Pupils who are learning at home visit school to change their books when necessary.
- Parents of pupils who are attending school told inspectors that they feel their children are making good progress in their reading. They say that teaching assistants hear pupils read almost every day. However, governors have decided that teachers cannot use their cameras to have any visual contact with pupils who are learning at home. This means that teachers or teaching assistants cannot see or hear pupils read if they are not in school. This decision is under review currently, as is leaders' decision that pupils with SEND, who are working from home, do not receive live learning sessions from teaching assistants.
- Teachers are much better at identifying pupils with SEND now. The special educational needs coordinator trained teachers on how to do this. A national leader of education visited the school to check that teachers are identifying pupils' needs accurately. Teachers have written individual plans for each pupil. Teachers adapt lesson plans and activities to help pupils with SEND

understand their work. This is helping pupils with education, health and care plans who are learning in school.

- Governance is beginning to improve. Governors are getting better at making senior leaders prove that their ideas are working. They are starting to evaluate the actions leaders have taken in the development of a new curriculum. For example, governors now ask senior leaders to provide impact statements with their reports. Leaders have to provide evidence to back this up. Governors meet staff and pupils to check the information provided by leaders. When professionals monitor leaders' work, governors attend feedback meetings so that they hear expert findings for themselves.
- Governors commissioned several professionals to monitor different improvement priorities, including the provision for pupils with SEND. The local authority, correctly, advised governors to reduce the number of external advisers who visit and make contradictory recommendations. This streamlining is helping leaders to prioritise and stay focused on improving the curriculum and raising standards.
- Leaders have been working much more closely with the Diocese of Leeds since September 2020. This partnership is making a real difference. The diocese recommended a new associate governor, and the diocesan representative joined the governing body too. There is clear evidence of appropriate challenge and support from the Diocese of Leeds.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, staff and five governors. We discussed leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during the national lockdown with two representatives of the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Leeds.

We reviewed some pre-recorded lessons, observed teaching assistants hearing pupils read and evaluated documentation. This documentation included local authority records of visits, reports from an associate adviser at a teaching school, governor visit records and minutes of meetings of the governing body. We considered the views of 39 parents and 48 members of staff who responded to our surveys.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracey Ralph  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**