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Hilary Dunford
Headteacher
St Nicholas of Tolentine Catholic Primary School
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Dear Miss Dunford

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Nicholas of Tolentine Catholic Primary

Following my remote inspection with Marie Thomas, 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 last section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in October 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

- Since the section 5 inspection, two senior leaders and four teachers have left the school. There have been three interim headteachers. The current headteacher took up their role in September 2019. A new governing body started in September 2019 and worked alongside an interim management committee (IMC) until June 2020. Some of the IMC members are now trustees.
- Approximately 35% of pupils were educated remotely during the autumn term 2020, mostly for a few days. Pupils in the Year 5 and 6 class worked at home for six days.
- About 30% of pupils are currently being educated at school. This includes approximately 30% of the school's vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All children of key workers have been offered places at school.
- Currently, a small number of midday staff are absent due to issues related to COVID-19. Staff in school are providing extra help during lunchtimes.

Main findings

- Leaders and governors are ensuring that pupils receive a suitable education during this challenging time. You provide places at school for those who should have them, including vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers. You have checked that pupils working at home can work remotely on devices or by using paper packs. Staff provide a combination of live and pre-recorded lessons and weekly paper packs. Teachers use the school's online messaging service to keep in touch with pupils.
- Despite the current challenges, you are determined to continue to improve the school's curriculum. Teachers are reviewing how to make sure that pupils learn and remember more in each subject. Future curriculum plans to support pupils' missed knowledge, once pupils return to school, are now taking shape.
- You have reorganised the curriculum plan for this term to allow for remote learning. Staff provide daily mathematics, reading and writing lessons that match, as closely as they can, what pupils would experience in school. Teachers offer helpful guidance to parents on how to support learning at home. Staff are working effectively to adapt learning for pupils.
- Together with the English subject leader, you are making reading a priority. You told us that it is at the heart of improvement for the school. You have invested in new early reading books to help pupils who need to catch up. Teachers in the Reception and Year 1 classes send pre-recorded video clips to support parents as they read with their children. The outside 'pop-up' library provides pupils with extra books to enjoy.

- You and your staff team rightly make sure that you take time to understand the challenges that families currently face. Staff make extra calls to vulnerable families to offer guidance and support. You told us that some pupils who speak English as an additional language need more help at the moment. You are planning to begin extra phonics and reading sessions.
- Pupils with SEND who attend school continue to have important extra support from teachers and teaching assistants. Staff include specific learning resources in weekly packs to help pupils with SEND who are working at home. They also deliver reading books to pupils' homes. The special educational needs coordinator checks how well pupils with SEND are learning.
- Governors are supporting the school well during the pandemic. They have made sure that they understand the systems and methods that staff are using to provide education. Governors also provide challenge. They check how well pupils at home and at school are learning to ensure that teaching is effective.
- Teachers benefit from working alongside external advisers from the Cabot Learning Federation. You wisely direct the valuable support they provide towards improving the curriculum. Subject leaders are knowledgeable about the subjects they oversee. This is helping teachers to grow in confidence about what to teach and when.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. We met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils and staff. We also met representatives of those responsible for governance and an adviser from the Cabot Learning Federation who is working with the school.

We also saw examples of pre-recorded teaching and responses to learning tasks from pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Tonwen Empson
Her Majesty's Inspector