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4 March 2021

Stephen Belbin
Associate Headteacher
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Dear Mr Belbin

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Following my remote inspection with John Donald, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 10 and 11 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 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 teachers have an accurate knowledge of how well those pupils who are working from home are developing their phonic knowledge.

Context

- You are the third associate headteacher to lead the school since the previous inspection. A new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is now in place. A new chair of governors has joined the governing body.
- During the autumn term, all pupils were educated remotely for a period of time. The early years and key stage 1 classes were affected more than pupils in other year groups.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately one third of all pupils were in school. This included just under half of the vulnerable pupils. Half of all pupils with education, health and care plans were also attending on site.
- Around one tenth of staff were absent due to COVID-19 at the time of this inspection.

Main findings

- Leaders and governors work closely together to ensure the correct action is taken to provide an education for all pupils. Through regular contact with families, staff have identified the barriers that vulnerable pupils face when working remotely. You have taken action to remove these barriers. For example, you have provided families with laptops to enable pupils to access learning from home. This means that all pupils, whether working at home or in school, cover the same curriculum subjects.
- Prior to the pandemic, you had started to improve the curriculum. You were not swayed from this task by the demands of dealing with the COVID-19 restrictions. Consequently, new curriculum plans are now in place. Across different subjects, staff have thought carefully about how to build pupils' knowledge. Teachers plan learning in sequence effectively. For example, in history, subject content has been organised to help pupils understand the order that events took place.
- Subject leaders work well with teachers to strengthen their understanding of how pupils should build on their learning from the early years. You are in the process of developing the curriculum plans further. This is to ensure that in all subjects, plans contain precise details about the important knowledge you want pupils to learn and remember.
- Since September 2020, leaders have concentrated their efforts on helping pupils to improve their learning in mathematics and English. In these

subjects, teachers make detailed checks to identify precisely the gaps that pupils have in their knowledge. Teachers use this information to plan learning which meets pupils' needs, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Systems to check how well pupils are learning in other subjects are at an earlier stage of development.

- You and other leaders prioritise the teaching of reading. This includes developing vulnerable pupils' vocabulary and reading skills. The school's new online reading resource enables pupils who are working remotely to access a wide range of reading resources. Reading books for pupils in school are carefully matched to pupils' reading ability. Additional phonics sessions have helped younger pupils and those with SEND to improve their reading skills. Staff provide daily reading activities and resources for pupils working remotely. In school, teachers check how well pupils are developing their early reading and building their phonic knowledge. However, these checks are not in place for those pupils who are learning remotely.
- The SENCo is benefiting from a range of external training and development. She works closely with parents, carers and staff to identify precisely pupils' additional needs. She has ensured that support plans are in place for each pupil with SEND. Leaders check that these pupils receive support which is closely matched to their individual needs. This includes those pupils who are working remotely. Staff continue to work with other professionals, such as the school nurse, so that pupils with SEND get the help that they need.
- Governors are effective at supporting leaders and holding them to account. You and other leaders provide governors with a wide range of useful information. Governors work alongside subject leaders to check curriculum plans. Governors use their knowledge of the school to ask challenging questions. In English and mathematics, governors keep a close check on the progress of vulnerable pupils and those with SEND. Governors challenge leaders about the education of pupils working remotely. They check that leaders are taking effective steps to improve these pupils' access to the curriculum.
- The school has profited from a range of external support. The Diocese of Lancaster has assisted the school with improvements to governance. An experienced chair of governors has been appointed and this has strengthened the governance of the school. The local authority has provided a wide range of support. For example, advisers have delivered training to enhance the knowledge of subject leaders.
- In your role as associate headteacher, you are supporting leadership development at different levels. Staff have a positive view of the school. They appreciate the training and support that you provide.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke with you, the deputy headteachers and four subject leaders. We met with the SENCo, the leader of the school's pastoral team, and teachers from the early years. We also met with representatives of those responsible for governance, a representative of the Diocese of Lancaster and a representative of the local authority. These meetings were to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

In addition, we scrutinised minutes of governor meetings and curriculum plans. We looked at samples of pupils' work, including those working remotely. We observed pupils reading with an adult in school and spoke with pupils. We considered eight responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including four free-text responses, and 21 staff questionnaires. We held telephone calls with four parents.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector