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Catherine Hunt
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hunt

Additional monitoring inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School

Following my inspection with Karl Sampson, 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 have serious weaknesses.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, most of Ofsted's monitoring inspections are being carried out remotely. This inspection, however, took place on site due to concerns about safeguarding that had been identified at the last inspection.

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 was in January 2020.

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.

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

- Two members of staff have joined the school temporarily to replace staff currently taking maternity leave. Two governors have left, and replacements have been appointed.
- During autumn 2020, one Year 4 class was educated remotely for five days.
- School leaders have recently adapted their risk assessment to determine which pupils need to be educated on site. Currently, this is around 35% of pupils and includes all vulnerable pupils. Around half of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are attending school.

Main findings

- At the previous inspection in January 2020, safeguarding was judged ineffective. Staff were not passing on concerns about pupils' welfare routinely. Leaders were not responding appropriately to any concerns that staff did raise. Records of concerns were disorganised.
- There is a much improved culture of safeguarding. Staff share concerns appropriately with leaders. Records are well-organised and detailed. Leaders respond in a more timely manner and are increasingly working with external agencies. Governors now have the expertise to check leaders' actions to keep pupils safe. They do so with rigour.
- Leaders got off to a slow start with improvements to the quality of education, and also with the provision of remote learning. A lack of consistent support hampered progress. However, leaders have sprung into action this term and, with the help of a local multi-academy trust, have implemented an effective approach to deliver the curriculum for all pupils at this time.
- Pupils on site, and those at home, follow the same curriculum. Staff make good use of the school's communication systems to contact and support parents and pupils with remote learning. Leaders have set high expectations for staff. Continual improvements are helping to develop the experience for pupils. Sensibly, staff are providing more opportunities to check pupils' understanding and address any misconceptions. Leaders are starting to hold teachers to account and check the quality of this work.
- Staff have identified pupils who need extra support with their learning at this time. This includes vulnerable pupils and the pupils with SEND. Teachers set each of these pupils a suitable next step to learn in reading, spelling or mathematics, and they provide them with helpful extra teaching, either remotely or on site. Where possible, the most vulnerable pupils attend school. Staff review pupils' progress against these additional targets regularly and set new goals when they achieve them.

- Rightly, reading and phonics are a key part of current learning. Staff read with pupils individually, regardless of whether they are at school or home. Pupils enjoy reading to staff but sometimes their books are too hard, as they do not match the sounds that they know well enough. Phonics lessons take place daily for all of the youngest pupils. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that learning phonics remotely is difficult, and they know that they will need to provide vital opportunities for extra practice when the school reopens to all pupils.
- Since the last inspection, governance has strengthened considerably. The committees have been restructured and governors have benefited from help from professional associations. There are two new governors with expertise in education. Consequently, governors are now more proactive and challenge leaders with greater rigour. The governing body has a better understanding of the school's effectiveness and the part that governors have to play in securing further improvement.
- There have been delays and a lack of consistency in securing suitable external support. The local authority acted quickly to provide effective help with safeguarding but has not had the capacity to support school improvement. There is limited progress in finding a multi-academy trust for the school to join. Leaders have valued the support that they received from the Lighthouse multi-academy trust to develop remote learning. A new project board is providing direct support to leaders. It is too early to see the impact of this work.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted on site as safeguarding was judged ineffective at the last inspection.

We spoke to you and the acting deputy headteacher, subject leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, two groups of pupils, three governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown and improve safeguarding.

We reviewed documents and records, including those relating to safeguarding and the curriculum. We considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 34 free-text responses. We also took into account 13 responses to the staff questionnaire.

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

Yours sincerely

Caroline Dulon
Her Majesty's Inspector