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Kirstie Richards
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Dear Mrs Richards

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Pennington Church of England Junior School

Following my remote inspection with Louise Walker, 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 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 two successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in March 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.

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

- ensure greater adherence to existing subject plans for teaching the wider curriculum now so that pupils do not fall behind in their learning
- continue the review of the wider curriculum as a priority so that pupils benefit from the changes as soon as possible.

Context

- Since the last inspection, the school has appointed a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). A governor left in December 2020 and is yet to be replaced.
- During the autumn term 2020, approximately one in five pupils had to be educated remotely. No class or year group was more affected than others.
- At the time of the inspection, a quarter of pupils were being educated on site. Well over half of vulnerable pupils were attending school. The vast majority of pupils with an education, health and care plan were also learning on site.
- The school's SENCo is currently absent. The headteacher is managing the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) provision until the SENCo's return.

Main findings

- Leaders worked hard at the beginning of the partial closure of schools in January 2021 to ensure that the majority of remote learning can be provided online. They secured donations from the local community to make sure that any pupil in need of a laptop has been provided with one. Teachers have worked well with parents so that they are more confident using the technology at home with their children. Leaders keep careful check that pupils at home are engaged in learning. Systems for feeding back to pupils on their learning are evolving.
- Work to improve the curriculum following the last inspection started in earnest last autumn term. Leaders prioritised mathematics, English and religious education. The redesign of the wider curriculum is not as advanced. Leaders have made it clear to staff that online learning should maintain the changes in the core subjects. They have not directed the coverage of other subjects in the same way. Therefore, pupils have a daily diet of reading, writing and mathematics based on the new curriculum plans. Teachers supplement this learning with a selection of activities from other subjects during the week.
- The new reading curriculum means that lessons are more structured. All staff have been trained to teach phonics so that gaps in pupils' early reading skills

are tackled. Each reading lesson begins with activities that consolidate pupils' skills. Teachers match tasks carefully according to the age and reading ability of the pupils. Early signs are that pupils' fluency in their reading is improving. This approach has continued during the current partial closure of schools. Since September, staff have made sure that all pupils have access to electronic copies of reading books. This means that no one misses out. The weakest readers, in school or at home, receive additional support from teaching assistants to help them make progress.

- Staff are very aware of the needs of their vulnerable pupils. They encourage them into school wherever possible. Teachers monitor closely those who are learning remotely. They ensure that they are in frequent contact with this group of pupils.
- Leaders know how important it is to remove barriers to the learning of pupils with SEND. Since the last inspection, they have ensured that teachers adapt learning according to the needs of their pupils. Leaders have plans to further develop the special resource base as well as support for pupils with SEND across the school. They have had to delay putting some of these strategies into action during the current circumstances. Pupils with SEND who are attending school continue to get their usual additional support. Staff make regular contact with the families of pupils who are learning from home. They provide thoughtful and often personalised support for parents to help their children.
- Governors are well informed and focused on the school's priorities. They have a realistic view of the school's current position as well as a focus on the aims for the future. Governors assure themselves of what education the school provides through a structured monitoring process. They have been able to continue this virtually. Through their meetings with senior leaders, governors have been able to assure themselves of the quality and range of learning pupils receive.
- The local authority has offered a range of support and challenge to the school. Advisers have delivered training to support the development of the reading strategy in the school. This has meant that staff have become proficient in their phonics knowledge and teaching. The local authority's challenge and support have helped to improve the work of the governing body.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance and of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also carried out a review of the learning materials available to pupils and a variety of documentation relating to the work of the governors. We considered 29 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 11 responses to the staff survey.

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

Yours sincerely

Yasmin Maskatiya
Her Majesty's Inspector