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Rosemary Hince
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hince

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Joseph's RC primary school

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

- Following the previous inspection, you were appointed as headteacher. Three teachers have left the school and three have joined. Several other non-teaching staff have either left or joined the school during this period. In addition, four governors have left the school and three new governors have taken up their posts.
- In the autumn term of 2020, all pupils were educated remotely for a short period of time. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 spent more time at home than pupils in other classes.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately four out of ten pupils were being educated on site. This includes one third of vulnerable pupils and almost one half of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- At the time of this inspection, leaders were not dealing with any significant staffing issues.

Main findings

- Since you joined the school, you have successfully led improvements to the curriculum and the effectiveness of subject leadership. By March 2020, clear and ambitious curriculum plans were in place for most subjects. These plans set out clearly what pupils need to learn and by when. They also consider the order in which pupils should learn new knowledge to help them remember more. In these subjects, for example in history, pupils recount with ease what they know and remember about earlier topics.
- The pandemic has slowed improvements in curriculum planning in a small number of subjects, such as design and technology. Although effective plans have been written in these subjects, leaders have not had the opportunity to implement these plans as well as they have in other subjects.
- Due to the current circumstances, leaders have adapted how teachers deliver the curriculum. Subject leaders, for instance in computing, have changed the order in which some topics are taught. For example, topics that require more specialist teaching, such as coding, will be taught by teachers when all pupils return to school. Leaders have high ambitions for those pupils working at home, as well as those who attend school. All pupils continue to learn the full range of subjects.
- Pupils who are educated on site enjoy learning with their usual teacher every morning and with support staff in the afternoons. This provides consistency for pupils and allows them to follow the usual curriculum. During the afternoon, teachers focus on supporting those pupils who are learning at home. Teachers record short video clips to introduce learning and pupils record their work either on screen or on paper. Teachers also monitor pupils'

work in the afternoon and provide feedback, which helps to keep pupils focused. By working this way, pupils at home access learning successfully and are able to keep up with the curriculum.

- Leaders maintain a clear focus on the support given to vulnerable pupils and those with SEND. Staff are in regular contact with these pupils and their families. Leaders are alert to any concerns and make sure that support is provided quickly. Where help is required from other professionals, this is arranged swiftly so that pupils remain on track with their learning. Support to improve some pupils' behaviour and speech and language has been particularly effective during the pandemic.
- Before the pandemic, reading was a key priority. This remains the case. Pupils at home, as well as those in school, continue to receive effective daily phonics teaching and are expected to read daily. Video clips recorded for pupils at home, including children in the early years, are helpful for parents and carers, as well as pupils. This is because parents can understand how to support learning in phonics at home.
- Governors have invested in appropriate resources to engage pupils in reading. This has allowed pupils at home to access e-books online which are the same as the books in school and are much loved by pupils. Books are well matched to the sounds that pupils are learning. This enables them to read fluently and to understand the text. The pupils who read to us were confident and used their phonic knowledge and skills well to read unfamiliar words.
- The governing board has been strengthened since the last inspection. The new skills and experience offered by newly appointed governors complement those of existing governors. They provide strong support and challenge to ensure that the curriculum continues to be delivered and that remote education is effective.
- The local authority has provided appropriate support and challenge, for example to strengthen governance and subject leadership. Links to mathematics and literacy 'hubs' have provided important training for staff. This has secured improvement, for example, in achieving a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics across the school, including in key stage 2.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders and middle leaders. We also spoke with a representative of both the local authority and the Diocese of Salford, three members of the governing board, groups of pupils and groups of staff. Meetings explored leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. We considered eight responses from parents to Parent View, Ofsted's

online questionnaire, and 14 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. One of us also listened to pupils reading to a familiar adult.

We looked at a selection of evidence provided by leaders to show how they have developed the curriculum since the last monitoring inspection and how they are currently providing education. This included curriculum plans, examples of teaching materials and a sample of pupils' work. We also looked at minutes from governing board meetings and information regarding the leadership of SEND.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Hardman
Her Majesty's Inspector