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Jill O'Dell and Katherine Stephenson
Joint Acting Headteachers
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Dear Mrs O'Dell and Mrs Stephenson

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Tritlington Church of England First School

Following my remote inspection of your school on 25 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 at its previous section 5 inspections. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in April 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:

- develop the curriculum to ensure that all subjects are well sequenced so that pupils build their knowledge over time.

Context

- The previous headteacher left the school in the summer term of 2019. The school then had two successive acting head teachers: one for the autumn term 2019, and another for the spring and summer terms of 2020. Both these leaders continue to support the school in an advisory capacity. The joint acting headteachers took up post on 1 September 2020. An interim executive board (IEB) has been in place since January 2020.
- During the autumn term 2020, a small number of pupils had to be educated remotely for a period of time due to COVID-19.
- Most pupils are being educated at home at this time. Around 20% of pupils are attending lessons on site. Around 20% of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are attending school.
- At the time of this inspection, a very small proportion of staff were absent from school due to COVID-19.

Main findings

- Leaders and the IEB have made it a priority to ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, have access to on-site or remote education. All pupils are studying the school's usual curriculum, whether they are learning in school or from home.
- Pupils in school, and those learning from home, take part in frequent phonics and reading lessons as well as accessing story time with their class teacher. Leaders have made sure that pupils at the early stages of reading have access to appropriate books at home to support their learning in reading. Pupils continue to receive additional phonics support daily to help them catch up.
- Supported by school improvement partners, leaders have begun to develop the wider curriculum. Leaders know they have more work to complete in order to ensure each new unit of work builds on prior knowledge and that the curriculum is coherently sequenced and planned across all subjects.
- Leaders work hard to engage all families and share the extensive support they have put in place for vulnerable pupils and those struggling to access their learning remotely. This has enabled leaders to build positive relationships with their school community. Parents and carers who contacted Ofsted were very positive about the education and support their children receive. One parent called school 'one of the lifeboats during this storm'.

- Pupils with SEND who are in school receive bespoke support to help them with their learning. Due to the small number of pupils in school, adults are able to provide extra help each day. Pupils with SEND who are learning remotely also receive additional support. This takes place through pre-recorded videos, supplementary resources sent home and regular conversations between the leaders and parents.
- There has been considerable change in the governing body since the last inspection. This school now has an IEB in place which is providing support to the school. This is a temporary measure and the IEB is reviewing a number of options in order to find the best way of supporting the school in moving forward, including developing systems of accountability for the joint acting headteachers.
- The IEB has made strong links with external support partners including school improvement partners from the diocese and the local authority. Through this wealth of support, leaders have established their school vision and clear school improvement priorities. They have used the external support to help them make the necessary improvements to phonics and maths. Leaders know they need to continue this work across the wider curriculum.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. I spoke to you, members of the IEB, a representative from the diocese and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

I also looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 25 free-text responses, and 7 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Zoe Lightfoot
Her Majesty's Inspector