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19 March 2021

James Forber  
Interim Headteacher  
St Chads Catholic and Church of England High School  
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Cheshire  
WA7 5YH

Dear Mr Forber

**Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Chads Catholic and Church of England High School**

Following my remote inspection with Alyson Middlemass, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 4 March 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.

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. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in November 2019.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) 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:

- strengthen curriculum plans so that teachers are better informed about the knowledge that pupils need to know and remember
- develop staff expertise so that they can adapt subject curriculums to meet the individual needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
- strengthen teachers' abilities to support pupils' reading more effectively across subjects.

### **Context**

- An interim executive board (IEB) was formed in May 2020. The previous headteacher left the school in August 2020. An interim executive headteacher took up post between June 2020 and December 2020. You were appointed as interim headteacher in January 2021. A special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) joined the school in November 2020 and an assistant SENCo took up post in January 2021. Since the last inspection, 19 teachers have left the school and one has joined.
- In the autumn term, nearly all pupils have worked from home for a short period of time on at least one occasion. This has affected pupils in Years 8 and 9 more than other year groups.
- At the time of this inspection, a small proportion of pupils are attending school. This includes about one fifth of pupils with SEND and about one fifth of all vulnerable pupils. All other pupils are being educated remotely.

### **Main findings**

- The formation of the IEB has added impetus to leaders' actions to improve leadership and the curriculum. Their work, alongside the support from the local authority, has ensured that leadership and curriculum development have continued throughout the pandemic. As a result, pupils have continued with their education throughout the current challenging times.
- Improvements to the curriculum mean that it is now suitably broad. However, curriculum plans do not support teachers with enough detail about the knowledge that pupils should know and remember. Subject leaders are beginning to address this, but this work is still in its infancy.
- Pupils benefit from a remote education offer that reflects the breadth of the new curriculum. Staff use the online systems well to check on pupils' learning. Gradually, teachers are providing pupils with more useful feedback so that pupils can build on their learning. This is helping to ensure that pupils are increasingly engaged in an appropriate education at this time.

- The SENCo has begun to improve the systems to support pupils with SEND. Leaders are strengthening support plans so that they include better information about the needs of these pupils than they did in the past. Even so, teachers are at different stages of using this information confidently and competently to adapt subject curriculums to meet the individual needs of pupils with SEND. Nonetheless, leaders have ensured that these pupils are duly supported during the current challenging circumstances. Teachers are helping pupils with some of their learning needs when they are working from home. Teaching assistants use online systems effectively to support groups of pupils with SEND. Leaders work well with other agencies to provide these pupils with the additional support that they usually receive.
- Leaders ensure that vulnerable pupils in school and those working remotely are able to access their education. Staff provide helpful support for vulnerable pupils who are attending school. Pupils said that they value the opportunities they get to work in smaller groups. Staff are appropriately attentive to the needs of vulnerable pupils who are working from home. They support these pupils regularly with helpful discussions about their learning and welfare.
- Pupils in Year 11 largely follow their usual curriculum. However, leaders are mindful that these pupils have missed some learning which could not be delivered effectively under the current circumstances. You have suitable plans to make up for lost learning when the school reopens to all pupils. Staff provide helpful careers information, advice and guidance to pupils in Year 11 through a range of remote activities.
- Leaders established a clear picture of pupils' reading abilities in the autumn term. Staff provided a range of appropriate opportunities to assist pupils who needed support with their reading. Some aspects of this support have not been able to continue while pupils are educated remotely. Furthermore, subject teachers do not have a clear enough understanding of what they can do to further support pupils' reading.
- Members of the IEB have brought vital expertise and leadership capacity to the school. They have taken appropriate actions to ensure that new leadership and curriculum structures better meet the needs of the school. The IEB challenges and supports leaders well. This group rigorously evaluates the impact of leaders' actions. Throughout the pandemic, its members have established a deep understanding of the challenges that leaders have faced, and continue to face, in the current circumstances.
- The local authority has provided additional leadership capacity. This has significantly strengthened senior leadership and the leadership of the curriculum and SEND over the last year. Support from a local multi-academy trust has provided helpful guidance for subject leaders in their ongoing work to review and improve the curriculum.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with you and other senior leaders to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. We spoke with members of the IEB and representatives of the local authority. We also met with representatives from each diocese.

We spoke with groups of middle leaders, teachers and pupils. We also evaluated some of the work that pupils have completed in recent weeks.

We examined curriculum plans and records of the meetings of the IEB. We considered 30 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. We also took account of the 38 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the comments received via Ofsted's free-text facility.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the director of education for the Diocese of Shrewsbury, the director of education for the Diocese of Chester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Halton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pennington  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**