

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



13 April 2021

Sarah Bridgman
Headteacher
Tonwell St Mary's Church of England Primary School
Ware Road
Tonwell
Ware
Hertfordshire
SG12 0HN

Dear Mrs Bridgman

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Tonwell St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Following my remote inspection of your school on 18 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 improvement.

This monitoring inspection was carried out remotely. As such, the range of evidence available 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 January 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:

- ensure that subject leaders check that teachers plan and deliver the intended curriculum across all subjects
- check that the school's curriculum is enabling pupils to achieve well in all subjects.

Context

- Since the previous inspection in January 2019, there have been some changes to leadership, governance, and staff. You returned from planned leave in April 2019. Two governors left the governing body and four governors were appointed. In your small school, two of the four teachers have left and since been replaced. The office finance administrator took up post in April 2020.
- Approximately one half of pupils were educated at home in the spring term before the school reopened to all pupils. Almost all vulnerable pupils, and all pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), were being taught in school during that time.
- At the time of this inspection, all pupils were attending school on site.

Main findings

- Leaders and teachers worked closely with parents to identify the most effective way to deliver the curriculum remotely. A wide range of resources and equipment were provided to families to help them with learning at home. Leaders checked that pupils were engaging with the remote education and took swift action to encourage any pupils who were not taking part. As a result, almost all pupils engaged successfully with the remote education that teachers provided.
- In most subjects, teachers have continued with the usual curriculum. During the first part of the spring term, when around half of pupils were learning at home, some practical aspects of art, science and design and technology were postponed. Teachers have focused on teaching any missed subject content now that all pupils have returned to school. You plan for pupils to return to the normal curriculum in every subject by the start of the summer term 2021.
- Following the previous inspection, you have redesigned the school's curriculum. Subject leaders have developed plans that identify what pupils need to know and the order in which this will be learned. This content has been set out in all subjects from early years to the end of Year 6. Teachers started teaching the revised curriculum in September 2020. Subject leaders have not yet checked that their subjects are being taught effectively across all year groups.

- Teachers have assessed what pupils know and remember during lessons, through questioning and informal quizzes. However, leaders, including governors, do not know whether the revised curriculum is taught in a way that meets the different needs of pupils and enables them to achieve well over time.
- You have focused on improving reading throughout the school. You have purchased a range of high-quality texts to support the curriculum. Pupils read books that match the letters and sounds they know. Leaders have made sure that pupils at the early stages of reading are taught daily phonics lessons whether at home or in school. Well-trained teaching assistants provide additional support for pupils who are falling behind, so that these pupils catch up quickly.
- The positive relationships between home and school have continued during the pandemic. Leaders and staff have made sure that pupils, including those who are vulnerable, are safe and well. All the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, appreciate the guidance and support given by staff while their children were learning at home.
- You undertake the role of special educational needs coordinator in the school. Leaders have high ambition for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). You identify pupils' needs quickly and involve external specialists if necessary. This ensures that pupils with SEND receive the extra help that they need. You support teachers to ensure that the work they provide meets pupils' needs, both educationally and emotionally.
- Governors are increasingly effective at monitoring the school's work and holding leaders to account. Governors work closely with you and your leaders. For example, governors have held discussions with subject leaders to understand the revised curriculum plans. This means that governors are better placed to challenge leaders about the education that is being offered in the current circumstances. Governors are aware of the additional workload for staff and check their well-being regularly.
- Advisers from the local authority and the Diocese of St Albans provide support and challenge to ensure that the school continues to improve. They meet regularly with leaders and governors to discuss the impact of leaders' actions on the quality of education. Local authority advisers have provided training for subject leaders and teachers. This has resulted in improvements in English, mathematics, and the early years curriculum. You have appreciated the opportunity to work with another school to share best practice around curriculum planning and delivery.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. I spoke with you, your deputy headteacher, subject leaders, teachers, governors, and a local authority adviser. Discussions focused on leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. Additionally, I observed pupils reading to staff and spoke with a group of pupils about their learning.

I also scrutinised the school's website, curriculum plans, online teaching resources, and documents related to governance. I looked at the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 13 free-text responses, and reviewed the 10 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Webb
Her Majesty's Inspector