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Peter Tite
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Dear Mr Tite

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Our Lady and St John Catholic College

Following my remote inspection with Simon Hunter, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 23 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 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 three successive judgements of require improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in October 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 all curriculum plans outline clearly what pupils should know and remember as they move through the school.

Context

- Since the previous monitoring inspection, 12 teachers have left the school and 12 teachers have joined the school. Governors have appointed a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and new subject leaders for history and languages have taken up post.

- Approximately nine out of ten pupils were educated at home in the spring term before the school reopened to all pupils. Nearly two fifths of vulnerable pupils and approximately one third of pupils with an education, health and care plan were educated on site during that time.

- At the time of this inspection, almost all pupils were attending on site. A small proportion of pupils from different year groups were self-isolating and learning from home.

Main findings

- You are providing all pupils with an appropriate education whether they are in school or learning at home. You have made sure that the content of the school's usual curriculum continues to be delivered to all pupils. You and other leaders are re-establishing expectations of pupils to help them to settle back into school. Staff are supporting pupils' mental health and well-being, alongside the delivery of the curriculum.

- You developed teachers' confidence and competence in delivering remote education. Leaders work with families to make sure that pupils have the necessary equipment to learn from home. You made sensible adjustments to curriculum plans to ensure that pupils could continue to learn during the pandemic. For example, in art, a topic about 'sculptures' has focused on resources that can be found at home.

- Prior to March 2020, subject leaders were focused on reviewing and developing the curriculum. You acted to ensure that pupils in key stage 3 benefit from a broad curriculum for as long as possible. Since March 2020, subject leaders have continued to develop their curriculum plans, despite the disruption caused by the pandemic. As a result of this work, some subject curriculum plans, such as mathematics, clearly outline the knowledge that pupils must learn and when they should learn it. However, there is more to do to ensure that curriculums in other subjects are as well planned.

- Now that most pupils have returned to school, teachers have spent time finding out what pupils have remembered or have forgotten of their previous learning. Teachers are using this information to adapt the curriculum so that

pupils can cover missed learning or revisit key subject content. For example, teachers' checks showed that in mathematics pupils were struggling with fractions. Teachers now spend extra time recapping this aspect of mathematics to help pupils regain their earlier proficiency in this topic.

- You recognise the importance of ensuring that all pupils are successful readers. Your checks have found that some younger pupils are not reading as well as you would expect for this time of the year. Staff are supporting the weakest readers in school to develop their phonic knowledge and grasp of complex subject-specific vocabulary. You encourage pupils to read while learning at school and from home.

- Pupils in Year 11 continue to follow their usual curriculum. Subject leaders have prioritised the practical content of subjects, such as physical education and science, to help pupils catch up with some of the practical work that they have missed. Pupils in Year 11 value the careers guidance and virtual work placements that you provide. They feel well prepared for the next stage in their education, employment or training.

- The SENCo ensures that staff have accurate information about the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers make appropriate adjustments to resources for these pupils so that they can continue to learn at home. The SENCo works closely with other professionals, such as educational psychologists, so that pupils with SEND get the help that they need. You are continuing to improve the provision for pupils with SEND.

- Pastoral staff held regular conversations with vulnerable pupils during the period when the school was only open to some pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions. This helped these pupils to stay positive about the future. Now that most vulnerable pupils have returned to school, you are ensuring that they continue to receive extra help, such as regular mentoring sessions.

- Governors are well informed about the strengths and areas for development in the school. This is because they receive helpful information from you and other leaders. Governors ask appropriate questions about changes to the key stage 3 curriculum. They also took a keen interest in the remote education offer. They have supported you and the staff well during these challenging times.

- You and other leaders have benefited from effective support and challenge from the diocese, local authority and two teaching school alliances. This has had a positive impact in helping most subject leaders to improve their subject knowledge and curriculum planning.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, pastoral and subject leaders, the SENCo, pupils, three members of the governing body, and representatives of the local authority and the Diocese of Salford to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also carried out a review of the curriculum that pupils are receiving. This included the arrangements for delivering the curriculum remotely. We examined a range of documentation, including curriculum plans and minutes of governing body meetings. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 17 free-text responses, and 63 staff questionnaires.

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 Blackburn with Darwen. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector