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Joanne Morris
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Morris

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Paul's CE Primary

Following my remote inspection with Elizabeth Stevens, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 17 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 two successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in May 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:

- use the information about what pupils have learned and remembered in subjects other than English and mathematics and adapt the curriculum so that gaps in pupils' learning are resolved.

Context

- No key staff have either left or joined the school since the last inspection. The local authority appointed an interim executive board (IEB) to replace the governing body in January 2020.
- Across the spring term 2021, around six out of ten pupils were educated at home before the school re-opened to all pupils in March. Just over three quarters of vulnerable pupils and pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan attended on site.
- At the time of this inspection, all pupils were attending school on site.

Main findings

- When the school closed to most pupils in January 2021, you acted quickly and arranged remote learning for those pupils who were not in school. Staff have been trained well in systems to deliver education remotely. Consequently, they were able to provide a curriculum that followed the school's usual broad range of subjects. When all pupils returned to school on 8 March 2021, teachers continued to deliver the school's curriculum in most subjects. As a result, pupils have continued to receive an education in the current circumstances.
- Before the pandemic, you and other leaders reviewed the curriculum to make it more ambitious and aspirational for pupils. The new curriculum plans are now in place. They identify the important key knowledge you want pupils to know and remember. Curriculum plans have also been carefully designed to build on pupils' prior learning. For example, in history, pupils expand their understanding of chronology with each new topic.
- Now that all pupils have returned to school, teachers continue to deliver the planned curriculum in most subjects. However, some subjects, such as modern foreign languages and music, are currently not being taught. This is to allow pupils more time to focus on their reading and mathematical skills. You intend to return to teaching all subjects after the Easter break.
- In English and mathematics, teachers are checking on what pupils have remembered of their previous learning. They are carefully using this information to adapt the curriculum so that pupils can build on what they already know and cover any missed learning. In other subjects, leaders are beginning to identify what knowledge pupils have learned and remembered.

Plans are in place to adapt the curriculum in these subjects, so that gaps in learning are addressed and the most important knowledge that pupils need for future learning is prioritised.

- Teaching pupils to become confident and fluent readers is a high priority for you and the staff. Phonics is taught daily and teachers plan activities for pupils to read regularly. For younger pupils, teachers use books that match the sounds that pupils are learning. Staff make regular checks to ensure that pupils are making progress in reading and provide support for those who fall behind. This is helping pupils to catch up quickly.
- You and the staff work well with other agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive any additional help needed. At the start of the third national lockdown, you acted quickly to identify vulnerable pupils and encouraged them to come into school. As a result, most of these pupils continued to be well supported.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) maintains a clear overview of those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). She makes sure that staff and other agencies act quickly when support is needed. Staff receive regular training and support from the SENCo to ensure the needs of pupils with SEND are met effectively. In addition, staff adapt their curriculum plans so that learning is broken down into smaller chunks for pupils to grasp more easily.
- Members of the IEB have a good understanding of the challenges that you have faced as a result of the pandemic. They supported you and other leaders well to develop the school's remote education offer so that all pupils could access the usual curriculum. Throughout the pandemic, members of the IEB have continued to check on the school's progress against its improvement priorities. They have balanced this alongside the checks made on the well-being and workload of staff.
- Leaders at all levels welcome the support that they receive from the local authority. You have benefited from the support offered by a national and local leader of education. This has enhanced your leadership and management skills. Subject leaders have also worked with specialist leaders of education to improve their expertise in the subjects that they lead.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you and other senior leaders, subject leaders, pupils, members of the IEB and representatives of the local authority. We evaluated leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We reviewed documents such as the new curriculum plans. We looked at 22 staff questionnaires. We also sampled pupils' work. We observed pupils from the Reception Year, Year 1 and Year 2 reading to a familiar adult.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Barlow
Her Majesty's Inspector