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Rupert Kaye
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Kaye

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Christ Church CofE First School

Following my remote inspection with Marie Thomas, 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 two successive judgements of requires 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 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 all staff understand and follow the school's behaviour policy
- make clear the important knowledge staff want pupils to know and remember across the foundation subjects.

Context

- The school has had two changes to teaching staff since the previous inspection. Sadly, one of these changes was due to the sudden and recent death of a class teacher.
- Approximately, 25% of pupils attended school during the third national lockdown. This includes approximately 50% of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and 85% of pupils with an education, health and care plan. Approximately 80% of vulnerable pupils were in attendance.
- At the time of this inspection, no pupils were unable to attend school due to COVID-19.

Main findings

- Before the first national lockdown in March 2020, you took significant steps to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You continue to make improvements despite partial school closures, and the recent loss of a much-loved member of your team.
- Throughout the third national lockdown, you continued to offer the school's normal curriculum. When all pupils returned, you prioritised personal, social and health education to help them settle back into school. Teachers are using assessment information to find out how well pupils have retained important knowledge. They quickly noticed the quality and quantity of pupils' writing had slipped. Teachers are supporting pupils to return to the standards they are capable of in writing.
- Developing phonics across the school has taken centre stage of your improvement work. You sensibly provided a phonics curriculum, which mirrored the school's normal approach during the third national lockdown. When all pupils returned, you wasted no time in assessing pupils' knowledge. This has enabled you to provide precise extra teaching for the weakest readers. All pupils are benefitting from new reading books. These books, matched to their reading ability, help pupils to tackle unfamiliar words accurately.
- You have ensured a school-wide approach for teaching mathematics is in place, including in the early years. Teachers assess pupils regularly. This helps them find out whether they need to reteach previously taught knowledge.

Leaders uncovered that pupils' key mathematical knowledge needed shoring up. They acted on this swiftly, providing extra daily mathematics sessions to strengthen pupils' number and calculation knowledge.

- Leaders continue to improve curriculum plans for the foundation subjects, as well as working out the best way to teach knowledge that pupils have missed out on. Leaders have set further time to improve curriculum plans so they can prioritise the most important knowledge they want pupils to know and remember.
- Staff continue to support pupils with SEND effectively. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has provided useful training for staff to help improve in-class support and individual interventions. The SENCo continues to check the impact and suitability of support they provide for pupils with SEND.
- The local governing body (LGB) have been a useful source of support and challenge for you and your team. They know the school well. Despite disruption caused by the pandemic, governors share your determination to continue working on the school's improvement priorities. This enables them to evaluate effectively the impact of actions that you and your senior leadership team have taken.
- The local authority has provided you with helpful curriculum and school improvement support. Representatives of the local authority meet regularly with you, representatives of the diocese and the LGB to check the school's progress toward its improvement priorities. Your subject leaders have benefitted from the expertise of local mathematics and English hubs. This has contributed towards improvements in mathematics and phonics.
- Several staff members, who completed the staff questionnaire, indicated that they do not fully understand the school's behaviour policy. You are currently looking at ways to help staff understand better why pupils exhibit certain behaviours. You know that there is more to do to improve this aspect of the school's work.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, pupils, representatives of those responsible for governance, and representatives of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at curriculum plans and listened to pupils read to a familiar adult. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including nine free-text responses, and 29 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Nathan Kemp
Her Majesty's Inspector