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24 March 2021

Kelly Dunne  
Headteacher  
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Devon  
TQ12 1PT

Dear Ms Dunne

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School**

Following my remote inspection with Dale Burr, 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 improvement.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, 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 February 2020.

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:

- rigorously ensure that the headteacher implements curriculum plans which enable pupils to gain the knowledge they require for the next stage of their education.

### **Context**

- Since the last inspection in February 2020, there have been several changes to the leadership of mathematics. A substantive member of staff returned from extended absence in June 2020. Three governors have left, and two governors joined in September 2020.
- Across the autumn term 2020, approximately 40% of pupils had to be educated remotely. Years 1 and 2 were more affected than other year groups.
- At the time of this inspection, 35% of pupils were being educated on site. Approximately 50% of vulnerable pupils and 40% of pupils with an education, health and care plan were attending on site.

### **Main findings**

- Immediately after the last inspection, you set out your plans to tackle the areas identified for improvement. Shortly after this, COVID-19 restrictions came into place. Despite this, your commitment to drive whole-school improvement did not falter. Your actions to provide staff with substantial training to develop their subject knowledge in English and mathematics is already paying dividends.
- When pupils returned to school in September 2020, you identified that many had gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Swiftly, staff readjusted teaching plans to resolve any missed learning. By December 2020, such actions helped many pupils to improve their writing, and remember their number facts, with greater accuracy than before. Alongside this, you were quick in upskilling staff and pupils in using new digital technologies to strengthen the school's remote education offer.
- Since January 2021, vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers, who are learning in school, follow the same curriculum content as pupils who are learning at home. Teachers are checking pupils' understanding of important knowledge and this is helping teachers to plan sequences of lessons with more precision. Pupils who are identified for additional support in reading, writing and mathematics have continued to receive extra teaching sessions in school. This is not yet the case for some pupils who are learning at home.
- You are making headway in upgrading the whole-school approach to teaching reading. Many pupils are benefiting from a more challenging reading curriculum. It is helping them gain a greater understanding of what they read.

All staff are receiving ongoing phonics training. Week-on-week, staff are gaining more confidence in teaching this new and consistent approach. Increasingly, they make precise checks to find out whether pupils are mastering the sounds that letters make. Pupils have increased opportunities to practise and apply their reading each day. As such, many pupils are learning more and reading with greater accuracy.

- In addition to phonics teaching, the early years leader and her staff are implementing a well-thought-out approach to develop children's speaking skills, role-play, and love of stories. As such, more children are speaking in full and extended sentences than before.
- Beyond English and mathematics, all other subject leaders are receiving the comprehensive training they need to understand their roles and responsibilities in full. Importantly, subject leaders have revamped curriculum plans so they set out the essential knowledge that pupils need to know and by when they need to know it. However, leaders' actions to implement these new plans are in their infancy.
- The special educational needs coordinator is in regular contact with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their families. She ensures that pupils' pastoral and academic needs are identified accurately. As headteacher, you make sure that teachers provide pupils with the additional resources they need to learn successfully whether they are at school or at home.
- The multi-academy trust has stringent systems to check the remote education the school provides. The local governing body asks precise questions about pupils' attendance and gains assurances about safeguarding practices in school. However, it is not yet holding leaders to account sufficiently when it comes to implementing the school's curriculum plans. Governors are not challenging leaders firmly about how well pupils, including those with SEND, are being prepared for their next stage of education.
- The trust has brokered much external subject support. Leaders and teachers are receiving a wide-ranging package of reading, writing and mathematics training from external providers. The trust is bolstering subject leadership by pairing new subject leaders with experienced subject leaders from another school. This work is already strengthening subject leaders' knowledge and skills markedly.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other staff members, the director of education for Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust, governors and the school's education standards manager to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read, and examined school and trust minutes of meetings. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 18 free-text responses, and 13 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Plymouth, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**