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Margaret Kolanowska
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Dear Ms Kolanowska

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Daniel-John Constable, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 25 February 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 October 2018.

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 that the phonics programme is supported by fully decodable books, so that all pupils have regular opportunities to practise reading fluently using texts that match the sounds they know

- refine curriculum planning in history, geography, and science, so that the content in each subject is clearly sequenced to help develop pupils' knowledge.

Context

- A new senior leadership team has been appointed since the previous inspection. This includes the appointment of a deputy headteacher for curriculum in September 2019 and a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo).

- During the autumn term 2020, one fifth of pupils had to work at home due to COVID-19. This included the Year 5 'bubble' which was required to close for one week. No other year group bubbles were affected.

- At the time of this inspection, a quarter of pupils were being educated on site. Just over half of all vulnerable pupils and just under half of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were also on site. This includes pupils with education, health, and care (EHC) plans.

- Leaders are currently dealing with significant levels of staff absence. The majority of this absence is not related to COVID-19.

Main findings

- Leaders and governors are taking suitable actions to provide education in the current circumstances. Pupils learning remotely access three pre-recorded lessons daily. These lessons include English, mathematics and one other curriculum subject. Tasks are set and submitted online. Teachers check the work, give pupils feedback, and expect pupils to respond. Pupils in school are taught the same subjects as those learning from home.

- The current curriculum is evolving. Prior to the pandemic, leaders had prioritised writing, with new subject planning introduced. Plans for mathematics are similarly well developed. However, refinement of curriculum planning in geography, history and science is less well advanced.

- Leaders have thought carefully about adapting the curriculum for remote learning. For example, in computing, new knowledge has been introduced and taught in a different order. The coding unit will be taught when all pupils are back in school and have access to the resources required. Leaders have instead chosen to focus on digital citizenship. This includes learning about

'fake news' and 'email phishing' as part of a broader focus on e-safety. In mathematics, the unit on statistics has not been taught as planned this term. Leaders decided to prioritise the teaching of mathematical facts instead. They wanted to ensure that all pupils have a firm grasp of number. Any missed units of learning will be taught when all pupils return to school.

- Leaders prioritise resources for the most vulnerable pupils, whether they are learning at home or on site. For example, staff provide one-to-one reading sessions up to three times a day for pupils in school. A mentor is also available to support pupils' pastoral and well-being needs. Individual video calls are made daily for any pupils struggling to take part fully with remote learning from home.

- A phonics programme has been in place for several years. However, staff needed training. This happened in January 2020. As a result, the school has enough experts to deliver the programme. Books currently used are broadly decodable. Further resources are needed to make sure all reading books precisely match the sounds pupils know. This will mean that pupils have the right texts to develop their reading fluency effectively.

- Leaders have high expectations of pupils with SEND. These expectations are matched with a sharp focus on making sure that pupils with SEND receive appropriate support during this time. For example, parents and pupils have been given guidance on using technology that turns speech in to text and vice versa. This enables pupils with SEND to access the same learning as their peers.

- Governors are fully involved with the school. Governors' contact, challenge and support has continued throughout lockdown. Leaders are challenged about the decisions they make to provide education in the current circumstances. For example, governors reviewed the remote education offer available for children in the early years. Following this review, governors challenged leaders to make improvements and, in particular, increase online participation within the early years. This work is bearing fruit. For instance, children take part in regular sessions with the physical education teacher. Teachers set up 'scavenger hunts' for children to do at home. These encourage children to use knowledge that they have been taught remotely. For instance, children have to find objects to help them practise counting to ten.

- Governors know that some areas of the wider curriculum are not as developed as reading, writing and mathematics. Governors must now support and challenge the development of these subjects and the staff that lead them.

- The local authority is supporting the school with its wider curriculum development. COVID-19 has delayed the implementation of new curriculum

planning in some subject areas. The school began a partnership with a local English hub in January 2021. This is predominantly to support with the provision of reading, and in particular phonics. It is too early to see the impact of this support.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, the deputy headteacher, the SENCo, staff, governors, and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We listened to pupils read. We looked at the school's online learning platform with teachers and reviewed pupils' work. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 110 written responses and 40 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Alison Colenso
Her Majesty's Inspector