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Claire Faubert  
Acting Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (Dewsbury)  
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Dear Ms Faubert

**Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (Dewsbury)**

Following my remote inspection with Andrea Batley, 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 requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in February 2018.

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 governors have the skills and knowledge to support and challenge the school's leaders effectively
- identify the most important knowledge in each subject that pupils need to learn
- identify key assessment strategies in each subject to check the progress that each pupil is making.

### **Context**

- The previous headteacher resigned in March 2020. An acting headteacher and acting assistant headteacher are leading the school temporarily until 2022.
- One governor left in 2020 and was not replaced. There are five vacancies on the governing body.
- The majority of pupils, precisely 64%, learned at home during the spring term. All pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) attended school.
- Most pupils are back at school now. Typically, six or seven different pupils have been self-isolating each week since 8 March 2021.
- Leaders are dealing with a high proportion of long-term staff absences. Four teachers, including an assistant headteacher, the reading leader and the early years leader, are on maternity leave. Two members of staff are isolating due to issues related to COVID-19.

### **Main findings**

- Only six of the 11 spaces on the school's governing body are filled. A high proportion of governors are members of staff. Only three of the six governors have been appointed externally by the diocese. Governors know that the wider curriculum is at a very early stage of development. There are too few governors to challenge and support inexperienced school leaders effectively.
- When the previous headteacher left in spring 2020, governors made a strategic decision not to recruit a new headteacher. They did not replace an executive headteacher who left in December 2020. Governors expect the two temporary senior leaders to cover all the leadership responsibilities of the many absent senior and middle leaders. As a result, there is insufficient leadership capacity to drive the necessary improvements to the wider curriculum.

- The curriculum for reading is already established. Leaders introduced a new phonics scheme four years ago. They also introduced new reading books that match this phonics scheme closely. Teachers assessed key stage 1 pupils' phonics knowledge last week. They noticed that many Year 1 pupils cannot blend sounds. Teachers and teaching assistants are now providing extra phonics lessons for these pupils every day. This gives pupils the extra practice they need as they learn to blend sounds.
- Governors appointed a new subject leader for mathematics in September 2020. This experienced teacher is familiar with the mathematics curriculum preferred by the school. He understands what pupils have learned in mathematics and he has identified where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge. The mathematics leader has plans in place to help pupils catch up.
- All teachers taught three lessons every day when pupils were learning remotely. Most pupils joined in with these lessons. Teachers can easily do this again if they need to. Parents were very happy with these remote education arrangements. One parent said, 'I feel our school provided excellent online learning during the national lockdowns and the level of support from the pastoral team was second to none!'
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the learning mentor check that teachers provide suitable work for pupils with SEND. Staff regularly check whether pupils with SEND need additional resources to help them complete their work. The SENCo gives extra training and support to newly and recently qualified teachers. This helps less experienced teachers to meet the individual learning needs of each pupil with SEND.
- The experienced SENCo has resigned and is leaving in April. Governors did not advertise this vacancy externally. The decision to recruit internally means that senior leaders will have to train a member of staff to become the SENCo. This will increase pressure on the acting headteacher and acting assistant headteacher in the short term, and further undermines leadership capacity.
- Governors recruited four teachers who are in their first or second year of teaching to cover maternity absences. These teachers say that senior leaders are giving them the extra training and support that they need. However, as these teachers cannot lead subjects yet, there is insufficient leadership capacity to develop curriculum plans for every subject of the national curriculum. Leaders, including governors, know that the wider curriculum is underdeveloped.
- Communication between the local authority and the diocese is not good enough. The local authority has clearly identified the risks to the school of diminished leadership capacity, and the impact of this on curriculum development. The local authority has provided support from a national leader of education. Senior staff are receptive to this support, but they are

overburdened. The diocese does not have a clear grasp of these pressures. Consequently, the diocese has not taken the necessary actions to strengthen governance and increase leadership capacity.

### **Evidence**

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

We also observed pupils reading to their teacher and evaluated documentation. This documentation included records of visits by the local authority and minutes of meetings of the governing body. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including nine free-text responses, and 22 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracey Ralph  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**