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Rachel Crolla
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Crolla

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

Following my remote inspection with Elizabeth Stevens, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 30 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 a judgement of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in November 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 that all curriculum plans show how teaching will build on what pupils have learned before.

Context

- You were appointed as headteacher in April 2018. One member of the leadership team has left the school and a new deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have taken up post. Four governors have left the governing body and four new governors have been appointed.
- Approximately half of all pupils were educated at home at the start of the spring term when the school was only open to some pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions. Over half of all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and half of all pupils identified as vulnerable, attended school.
- At the time of this inspection, almost all pupils were attending school. A very small proportion were self-isolating.
- At the time of this inspection, a small proportion of staff were absent due to COVID-19. Leaders have redeployed staff to ensure any absence does not have a negative impact on pupils' learning.

Main findings

- You explained that many pupils and their families found the period when the school was only open to some pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions at the start of the spring term particularly challenging. You, governors and leaders have taken the necessary steps to ensure that pupils' return to school has been a smooth process. Teachers have dedicated additional time to the teaching of personal, social and health education to support pupils' mental health and well-being. Specially trained staff are providing additional emotional and social support to the small number of pupils who need extra help. These positive actions have helped pupils settle back into school quickly.
- At the start of the pandemic, leaders were in the process of improving the curriculum. In most subjects, leaders' curriculum plans identify the important knowledge that pupils will learn. However, the pandemic has slowed down curriculum development in some subjects. This means that curriculum planning in these subjects does not identify the essential knowledge that pupils will learn as they move through the school. This hinders teachers from planning activities that build on pupils' prior knowledge.
- You and other leaders are identifying which other aspects of the curriculum have been missed or forgotten due to the impact of the pandemic. Subject leaders are in the process of adapting curriculum plans to ensure that pupils

are well prepared for future learning. Due to teachers' checks in mathematics, pupils are revisiting essential knowledge such as place value and number.

- Teachers' checks on pupils' reading have given them a detailed view of the phonic knowledge that younger pupils have learned and remembered. Supplementary phonics sessions are in place to support those pupils who have gaps in their phonic knowledge. Teachers have also identified that a number of older pupils need extra support with their comprehension skills. Teachers' plans have been adapted to incorporate extra reading sessions to help pupils catch up. Leaders ensure that pupils continue to read books that closely match the sounds that they know. This is helping them to read with greater fluency. Teachers read to pupils daily, from a wide range of texts, to promote a love of reading.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has enhanced her expertise by participating in a range of external training and development events. She has shared her expertise with staff to improve provision for pupils with SEND. Throughout the pandemic, the SENCo has maintained regular communication with parents and carers. This has enabled parents to share any concerns that they have about their children's social and academic needs. Despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, leaders continue to work in partnership with a range of agencies, such as speech and language. This support has enabled leaders to support pupils' individual needs effectively.
- Leaders place a high priority on supporting vulnerable pupils. These pupils receive additional academic support. For example, leaders are providing one-to-one tutoring to help pupils catch up on missed learning. Leaders provide all pupils, including those who are vulnerable, with suitable pastoral support. This has helped pupils continue with their usual learning on their return to school.
- Governors work closely with you and other leaders. They have maintained regular meetings to support and challenge the work of the leadership team. This has enabled governors to have a clear understanding of the steps that leaders are taking to improve the curriculum. Governors regularly check on the well-being and workload of you and other staff.
- The local authority provides effective support to leaders, governors and staff. Subject leaders benefit from the curriculum training that the local authority delivers. The local authority has brokered links with other schools. These links are enabling leaders to further develop the curriculum. The local authority adviser has an accurate view of the priorities for improvement and supports and challenges you to achieve these goals.

Evidence

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

We also reviewed documents relating to the school's curriculum. We listened to pupils read and talked with a group of pupils from key stage 2 about their experiences of school. We considered nine responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including five free-text responses, and 26 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

John Tomlinson
Her Majesty's Inspector