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Kelly Stanesby
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Dear Mrs Stanesby

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Leonards Church of England (VA) First School

Following my remote inspection of your school on 25 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 at its previous section 5 inspections. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in January 2019.

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:

- work with external partners to review the impact of the approaches used to improve pupils' writing, and consolidate and put into practice those which have been the most effective
- gather the necessary information about the school's work to inform and agree the strategic priorities for further school improvement.

Context

- Since the last inspection, one teacher and one teaching assistant have left the school. One full-time teacher and a part-time teacher for the early years have been appointed. Last year, four members of the governing body resigned, including the chair of governors. Three new governors have been appointed. The new chair of governors is also the assistant director of education for the Diocese of Lichfield.
- At the start of the spring term, half of all pupils were educated at home. All vulnerable pupils attended school on site. A very small number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) attended part time.
- At the time of this inspection, all pupils were attending on site.
- At the time of this inspection, the headteacher is covering a teacher who is shielding but is due to return after Easter.

Main findings

- Since the last inspection, you have adapted the curriculum, beginning in the early years. You have made sure that the early years curriculum provides appropriate stepping stones for children to move successfully onto the key stage 1 curriculum. You and staff have placed greater emphasis on deeper learning, breaking activities into smaller steps and revisiting learning frequently.
- Pupils revisit subject content through a rolling programme of activities. You have had to re-order some subject content due to the difficulties of learning some new concepts or carrying out practical activities in the home. In computing, for example, pupils learned about e-safety as part of remote education and are now focusing on coding in school.
- Following assessments, you have noticed that pupils who have not attended school during lockdown have made less progress than other pupils. You have adapted the timetable to focus on areas of learning where you know pupils are struggling, providing extra help where needed. You have identified the key information you want pupils to learn.

- In mathematics, pupils have continued to focus on the 'fantastic four' methods at home and at school. As a result, pupils have remembered this learning. You are revisiting some new content that was introduced during lockdown, including concepts of time and length.
- Standards in writing have been most affected by the school closures. Pupils have struggled to write at length at home. As a result, you have adapted your approach to the teaching of writing. For example, you are focusing on sentence structure and shorter tasks on grammar and punctuation. Pupils have recently begun a daily activity of sentence dictation, applying phonics knowledge to their writing.
- You have maintained a strong emphasis on physical health and well-being throughout the pandemic. Pupils told the inspector that they were glad to be back at school because they are working harder, and there are fewer distractions. They are looking forward to when school clubs can start again.
- You are confident that previous arrangements for remote education can be put into practice should any pupils need to self-isolate in future.
- During lockdown, pupils were well supported to continue their phonics and reading practice, and as a result have not fallen significantly behind. Parents have benefited from a reading workshop prior to the school closing, to enable them to understand the school's approach. Pupils were encouraged to video themselves reading aloud at home, which enabled teachers to check on how pupils were getting on with their reading.
- During lockdown and beyond, you have maintained your drive to promote a love of reading. Your current focus of 'spectacular stories and mysterious mysteries' is exposing pupils to a range of classic literature. Each class has an 'author book', and pupils are encouraged to research books written by specific authors such as Michael Morpurgo and Beatrix Potter.
- Vulnerable pupils and those with SEND have benefited from small-group support during lockdown. If pupils had to work at home, staff made adaptations to the work, or provided extra guidance. For example, staff created a video of spoken rather than written instructions. The focus on small steps of progress and lots of repetition is having a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- The changes to the membership of the board have brought about a renewed focus to the drive for school improvement. New roles and responsibilities have been established and necessary actions are being taken to begin to support the strategic development of the school. However, this work is at an early stage. The chair of governors can clearly articulate the next steps for the governing body. Members have not been able to visit the school to begin

monitoring in earnest. Plans are in place to develop strategic priorities for the board linked to the school's improvement journey.

- The local authority facilitated appropriate support for the school following the last Ofsted inspection, and this work has been subsequently monitored for its impact. Additional support for writing has been earmarked for the summer term. The local authority was instrumental in supporting the school to secure new membership of the governing body.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. I spoke to you, other members of staff, five members of the governing body including the chair of governors, a school improvement adviser and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

I also met with a group of pupils and observed some pupils reading to a member of staff. I looked at the 18 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 10 free-text responses, and six staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Deb Jenkins
Her Majesty's Inspector