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Patricia Burton
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Dear Mrs Burton

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Hilda's CE Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Janette Walker, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 24 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 consecutive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in January 2020.

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:

- monitor and evaluate the implementation of the new curriculum to check that pupils make the progress that leaders intend in all subjects
- ensure that members of the governing body hold leaders to account for the quality of education in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, two governors have left and two new governors have joined the governing body.
- When the school was only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions at the start of the spring term, around four fifths of all pupils were educated at home. Approximately eight in 10 vulnerable pupils and around four in five pupils with an education, health and care plan attended on site.
- At the time of this inspection, most pupils were attending on site. A small proportion of pupils were self-isolating due to COVID-19.

Main findings

- You, other leaders and governors have taken appropriate steps to ensure that all pupils have had access to education. During the third lockdown, you identified vulnerable pupils and encouraged them to come into school. Staff made regular checks on pupils' learning and well-being. Staff also provided parents and carers with appropriate guidance to help them to support their children's learning at home.
- Over the last year, you have continued to improve your curriculum offer. Across all subjects, leaders have developed plans that identify the important knowledge that they intend pupils to learn and remember as they move through the school. Curriculum plans also include important vocabulary that pupils need to know.
- During the national lockdowns, pupils who were either learning at home or at school continued to access the usual curriculum. In mathematics and English, teachers followed the planned curriculum without needing to make significant changes. However, in subjects such as design and technology and science, teachers changed the order of learning so that learning at home was more manageable. Since the school has reopened to all pupils, you and the staff have adapted the curriculum plans to ensure that any missed learning is covered. For example, pupils are currently being taught investigative science in a two-week block.
- You and the staff are aware that pupils may have missed or forgotten other learning since the start of the pandemic. Staff have thought carefully about

how pupils should build on their earlier learning. They have used a variety of methods to check on whether pupils have remembered important information. Staff use this information to adapt curriculum plans to better meet pupils' needs. However, due to the pandemic, subject leaders have not been able to monitor and evaluate the impact of new curriculum plans to check that pupils are making the progress intended.

- You and the staff prioritise the teaching of reading. You aim to ensure that all pupils, including vulnerable pupils, become confident readers. Pupils access daily phonics lessons and read books that are matched to the letter sounds that they know. This helps to promote their love of reading and consolidates their phonic knowledge. Staff make regular checks to see how well pupils are learning. Extra support is put in place if pupils need to catch up. This is helping pupils to read with increased fluency.
- You are continuing to provide education that is closely matched to the school's usual curriculum for any pupils who are learning remotely. Staff set online lessons and provide useful resources such as video clips to support pupils with their learning. You intend for these arrangements to continue should pupils need to work remotely in the future.
- The school's special educational needs coordinator is experienced and knowledgeable about the school community. She has kept in close contact with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those pupils identified as vulnerable throughout the period when schools were only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions. She made sure that these pupils were well supported, whether they were learning in school or at home. Staff adapt learning activities so that learning is broken down into smaller chunks for pupils with SEND to grasp more easily.
- You make sure that governors are provided with the information that they need to support and challenge you and other leaders. Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have a clear understanding of the actions being taken to provide education to pupils in the current circumstances. Governors explained the steps that you and the staff have taken to improve the curriculum in English, mathematics and science. However, the restrictions imposed by the pandemic have limited governors' ability to hold leaders to account for the quality of education in other subjects.
- You and other leaders have benefited from a range of support provided by the local authority and from a national leader of education. This has strengthened leadership and management skills at all levels across the school. In addition, it has provided most welcome support to you as headteacher during this challenging time.

Evidence

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

We also looked at a wide range of documentation, including curriculum plans, and minutes from meetings of the governing body. We talked to pupils and observed pupils from the Reception Year to Year 2 read to a trusted adult. We looked at 15 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 43 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Barlow
Her Majesty's Inspector