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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Kevin McGoldrick
Headteacher
St Pius X Catholic Primary School
Schneider Road
Barrow-in-Furness
Cumbria
LA14 4AA

Dear Mr McGoldrick

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Pius X Catholic Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Julie Barlow, 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 was judged to require improvement at its previous section 5 inspection 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 the curriculum plans for all subjects are carefully organised so that teachers can easily identify what knowledge pupils need to acquire and when.

Context

- Four new teachers and six new governors have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- Approximately three quarters of pupils were educated at home when the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term. Around four fifths of the school's vulnerable pupils were attending on site. All of the pupils with education, health and care plans attended school during this period.
- At the time of this inspection, all pupils were attending school.

Main findings

- You have worked effectively with staff to ensure that pupils receive an education at this time. Following a period in which most pupils have been educated remotely, you have overseen a seamless return to school for those pupils who were learning at home. Parents and carers are appreciative of the way that you have kept them informed about pupils' learning throughout this challenging school year. All members of staff told us that they are proud to work at the school and that they feel well supported by school leaders.
- There have been several occasions during this school year when groups of pupils have had to be sent home due to COVID-19. However, you have developed effective systems to support pupils' learning while they were at home. You have made sure that pupils who still need to learn remotely have access to the necessary equipment and support to do so. As a result, all pupils are able to continue studying their usual curriculum.
- Prior to the pandemic, you had introduced new curriculums in reading, writing and mathematics. You had also worked with external partners to develop the music and physical education (PE) curriculums. Plans for these subjects are detailed and well sequenced. However, your plans for other subjects lack detail about exactly what pupils need to learn and how this knowledge should be ordered.
- You have begun to assess the impact of the pandemic on pupils' reading. You have ensured that the teaching of phonics has remained a priority. Daily lessons continued for all pupils whether they were in school or at home during the partial school closures. You have recently invested in suitable reading books for pupils who struggle with early reading, so that they can practise their skills in school and at home. You have found that some older pupils have

lost their enthusiasm for reading. However, teachers are now ensuring that all pupils read in class every day. They are also encouraging pupils to read more regularly at home, through reading challenges and online resources.

- The checks that you have made recently on pupils' learning have highlighted aspects of the curriculum that teachers have not yet taught during this school year. For example, pupils have not been able to participate in team games in PE. Nor have they had the opportunity to use scientific equipment or conduct simple scientific tests. Subject leaders are adapting their curriculum plans to identify the key knowledge that pupils need to be taught in each curriculum area during the remainder of this school year.
- Staff continue to provide additional support for vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). You have made sure that these pupils have been able to access their normal curriculum during the partial school closures, with adaptations depending on their needs. Staff have ensured that pupils with SEND who require additional help continue to receive this support. Staff have also continued to work with external agencies, where necessary, to support pupils and their families.
- Governors have kept in close contact with you and other leaders throughout the pandemic and they have taken a strong interest in staff's workload and well-being. Governors have also supported leaders in ensuring that pupils have access to the curriculum when they are learning at home. For example, they recently approved the purchase of laptops for some pupils. Governors now meet regularly with subject leaders and this has helped them to gain a better understanding of the school's work.
- The local authority has helped to strengthen leadership in the school. It makes regular checks on the school's progress and provides support where necessary. For example, the local authority worked with the diocese to arrange for a national leader of education to work alongside subject leaders. This is helping to improve the curriculum.

Evidence

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

We looked at 41 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 29 free-text responses. We also considered the responses to 36 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector