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25 May 2021

Bill Moore  
Stoke St Michael Primary School  
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Stoke St Michael  
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Somerset  
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Dear Mr Moore

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stoke St Michael Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 5 May 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection 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 improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

**Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.**

The school should take further action to:

- sharpen their action plans, so that governors can evaluate the impact of leaders' actions to improve the quality of education pupils receive, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

## **Context**

Stoke St Michael Primary School is federated with Croscombe Church of England Primary School. Since the previous inspection, there have been several staff changes. Two new co-headteachers took up post in September 2020. The co-headteachers and the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) work across the federation. Since September 2020, the SENDCo has increased the time she spends at this school. There have been changes to teaching and support staff, including in the Nursery. There are two new governors.

Since January 2021, governors have appointed a temporary co-headteacher who is the operational officer for business, information technology, health and safety and finance across the federation. In light of the challenges the school is facing due to COVID-19, some actions are not as far forwards as leaders had originally intended.

## **Main findings**

Leaders, including governors, are working systematically to address the many previously identified weaknesses in the school. Leaders took swift action to ensure that all staff have the knowledge and skills they need to deliver education remotely during the pandemic. This improved pupils' engagement in learning markedly from January 2021.

Leaders are working swiftly and successfully to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. At the same time, there is an acute focus on assuring pupils' well-being, including their mental health. Leaders' work to overhaul the personal, social and health education curriculum, and retrain staff, is proving effective.

Leaders' and teachers' actions to strengthen the teaching of reading are paying off. Additional training in the teaching of phonics is strengthening staff subject knowledge. Teachers are making more precise assessments to check pupils' phonic knowledge. Extra teaching is enabling all pupils at an early stage of reading to read more words and sentences accurately.

Leaders are starting to implement important work to ensure that there is greater consistency across the early years from age two to five. However, some aspects of this work are delayed due to COVID-19. As such, it is too soon to see demonstrable impact in some areas of learning.

The SENDCo and pastoral staff are ensuring that pupils' social and emotional needs are being met. Work has started to tailor the academic support that pupils with SEND receive in class. Training is beginning to develop staff subject knowledge in this area of the school's work. However, leaders are not checking effectively enough how well pupils with SEND are learning the curriculum.

Leaders are making incremental improvements to the quality of education pupils receive. Leaders' and governors' work to train new subject leaders and governors is already underway. However, leaders' work to overhaul the content of some curriculum subjects has stalled due to COVID-19.

Pupils enjoy the work they do, particularly in science. However, in some other subjects, pupils do not learn the essential subject content they need to gain the depth of knowledge they should. Leaders do not have a close enough eye on the implementation of the curriculum. Leaders rightly understand the importance of prioritising vital curriculum development work so that pupils are better prepared for their next stage of education. However, this work remains in its infancy.

Governors are becoming increasingly skilled in asking pertinent questions and in challenging school leaders. The school's action plan identifies many of the right aspects for improvement. However, the plan does not set out leaders' intended actions precisely enough nor does it outline the timescales for rapid improvement to be achieved. Therefore, this makes it difficult for governors to monitor the impact of the school's work stringently.

### **Additional support**

The local authority has organised a range of leadership support. The local authority, governors and school leaders hold meetings to discuss the actions that leaders are taking to bring about school improvement. Meetings with an external adviser have reviewed the school's remote education offer since January 2021. Leaders are planning more work with an early years adviser and a local English Hub.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you and another co-headteacher. I also met with the English leader and the SENDCo. I talked to two representatives of Somerset local authority to discuss the actions the school has taken since the last inspection. I also met with staff to gather their views. I considered 18 responses, including 12 free-text responses, to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

I visited lessons, talked with pupils and reviewed pupils' work. I reviewed school documentation, including the school's action plan, minutes of meetings and records of monitoring activities.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**