

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



23 June 2021

Julie Paisley
Headteacher
St Michael's C of E Primary School
Dalston
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA5 7LN

Dear Mrs Paisley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Michael's C of E Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 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:

- develop further the curriculum plans in science, music, languages, physical education (PE), religious education (RE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE) so that pupils can build on what they already know and can do.

Context

Since the previous inspection, two new governors have been appointed. There has been a leadership restructure. Teachers have new subject leadership responsibilities.

Since September 2020, the school has dealt with many challenges relating to staff absences caused by COVID-19.

Main findings

You, school leaders and governors have prioritised appropriate actions to improve the school. At the previous inspection, teachers were well versed in delivering well-designed curriculums in English and mathematics. As a result, pupils learned well in these subjects. Curriculum plans in other subjects were not designed well. In order to overcome this weakness, you have appointed subject leaders and trained them well to develop their subject expertise and leadership skills. Subject leaders told me that they felt empowered and enthusiastic about their new roles and responsibilities.

Since March 2021, your actions to improve the school have continued in earnest. Subject leaders have identified the 'big ideas' that set out what they want pupils to learn. You have provided guidance for subject leaders to ensure that their curriculum plans are suitably ambitious for all pupils, including for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). To date, teachers are delivering improved curriculum plans in history, geography, and art. In science, music, languages, PE, RE and PSHE, leaders are still working to ensure that curriculum plans help teachers to plan learning that builds on what pupils know and can do already.

You remain committed to developing a consistent approach to the teaching of early reading and phonics across the school. Following effective phonics training, teachers ensure that younger pupils, including children in the early years, read books that allow them to practise the sounds that they know. Pupils in key stage 2 who require additional help with their reading and phonics benefit from extra support from well-trained adults. You continue to review and refine your approach to the teaching of reading across the school.

Governors are supportive of your efforts to improve the school. You keep them well informed about the improvements that leaders are making to the curriculum. This enables them to challenge you and hold you and senior leaders to account effectively. For example, members of the governing body ensured that you acted on inspectors' recommendations from the previous monitoring visit. This is helping to ensure that teachers better tailor the support for pupils, including those pupils who have recently been removed from the SEND register.

Additional support

You value the support and challenge provided by the local authority and the diocese, particularly their help in the development of curriculum plans. You are using this support effectively to design new curriculum assessment systems to help you to check what pupils have learned and remembered.

You have found support from an external consultant particularly helpful in refining your approach to the teaching of reading in key stage 2.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and a group of subject leaders. I met with the two co-chairs of the governing body, a representative of the Diocese of Carlisle and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited lessons and spoke with pupils. I viewed examples of pupils' written work. I observed pupils read to a trusted adult. I examined leaders' development plans and curriculum plans. I scrutinised documentation relating to safeguarding. I considered the 53 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, the 13 free-text comments and the 22 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

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

Yours sincerely

John Donald
Her Majesty's Inspector