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Andrew Truby
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Truby

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Joseph's Primary

Following my remote inspection with Andrea Batley, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 18 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 special measures.

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 special measures at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in July 2019.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 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 governors check the effectiveness of long-term plans for all curriculum subjects and how they support pupils' learning and progress.

Context

- Since the last monitoring inspection in January 2020, the previous executive head teacher left the school. Since February 2020, a new executive head teacher provides support two days per week. A head of school was appointed from within the school staff at that time. Two teachers and one teaching assistant have also joined the school. Five specialist leaders of education (SLEs) provide support one day each per week.
- When school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term 2021, approximately one third of pupils were educated at home. Just over three quarters of vulnerable pupils and two thirds of pupils with education, health and care plans were educated in school during that time.
- On 8 March 2021 all pupils returned to school. Following this return, one class 'bubble' of children had to learn from home for a period of time because of COVID-19.

Main findings

- Over the past year, turbulence in changes to staffing and governance has stabilised. You, and the head of school, work well together and staff morale is high. These relationships have helped to ensure that education is being provided to all pupils throughout the pandemic. The majority of parents and carers say that staff have high expectations of what their children can achieve.
- Leaders have placed a high importance on educating pupils irrespective of whether they are in school or at home. All pupils receive the same lesson content and some 'live' lessons. Pupils receive the resources they need, including electronic devices and textbooks. Teachers check the work of all pupils and help pupils to improve. Teachers' ongoing checks show that pupils working from home have not fallen behind their peers in school. As a result, when school reopened to all pupils, lessons resumed as usual. Teachers continue to check what pupils know and remember in every lesson. Adults support any pupils who need to revisit essential knowledge. This enables pupils to revise past learning without repeating whole lessons.
- In March 2020, the curriculum was in the early stages of development. You prioritised redesigning all subjects to establish what pupils would learn and in which order. This process was not delayed by the pandemic. You finalised mathematics and English plans urgently. You have recently appointed a new

curriculum leader within school. The SLEs have supported subject leaders to compile long term plans. As a result, most of the curriculum is now in place. Leaders have updated some subjects, for example art, very recently. Long term plans for computing are the next, and the last, subject for leaders to revise.

- The reading leader is adamant that every child will learn to read. Teachers choose texts to encourage any reluctant readers. All pupils in Reception and key stage 1 access a daily phonics session. All pupils access reading books which match their phonic knowledge. Older pupils have access to reading books with ambitious content and word choices. This helps them to develop their vocabulary. Teachers aim to foster a love of reading in pupils through online books and class novels. Pupils told us that that they value reading for pleasure.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive appropriate support. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has recently taken up her post. She and the head of school know pupils and their families well. Together they have made sure that pupils continue to attend health appointments. All parents of pupils with SEND, who gave their views, state that staff support their children to succeed.
- Since all pupils returned to school, vulnerable pupils have settled well. Where necessary, some pupils access help from adults or individual tutoring sessions. You make sure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive any help that they need. For example, if vulnerable pupils need to work at home, teachers contact them during and after lessons to check how well they are learning.
- The chair of the governing body is a national lead of governance (NLG). He is a strong role model for other governors. Governors ask challenging questions in meetings to check how well pupils are progressing in mathematics and English. However, they do not check on wider curriculum subjects in the same way. As a result, governors do not have a thorough understanding of the recently redesigned wider curriculum.
- The school currently receives a large amount of leadership support. The diocesan director of schools brokered the executive head teacher role and the SLEs. This has helped leaders to take the necessary actions and to upskill other leaders in school. A teaching schools alliance, English hub, and a phonics consultant all support leaders. This has accelerated the development of phonics and reading. You work well with the school's improvement advisor. She assures the quality of all leadership actions.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, the head of school, the SENCo, three governors, including the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese and the school improvement advisor to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also visited lessons and individual tutoring, talked to pupils, viewed pupils' work and listened to pupils read to a familiar adult. We reviewed 24 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 23 free-text responses, and 21 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Alison Aitchison
Her Majesty's Inspector