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Sarah Terrey
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Terrey

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Catherine's Roman Catholic School

Following my remote inspection with Susan Aykin, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 25 February 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.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, 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 successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in June 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:

- improve the skills and expertise of new subject leaders to help them check how effectively pupils are learning the planned curriculum.

Context

- Since the last inspection in June 2019, there have been significant changes in the school's leadership. You took up post as headteacher in January 2020. Two teachers, including an early years leader, have joined the school. The interim academy board has been replaced by a local governing body, including a new chair of governors, in February 2021.
- Across the autumn term 2020, no pupils had to be educated remotely.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately 45% of pupils were being educated at home. Around 95% of all vulnerable pupils and all pupils with education, health and care plans were attending on site.
- At the time of this inspection, one member of staff was working from home due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Main findings

- You have worked with determination to bring about the necessary improvements to the quality of education. You have rightly focused on developing teachers' expertise and redesigning the school's curriculum. You and your team have ensured that effective on-site or remote education is available to all pupils.
- In January 2020, you set about improving reading as a priority. In the early years and Year 1, a focus on also developing pupils' speaking and listening skills is paying off. Daily phonics lessons are helping pupils to remember the sounds that letters make. Staff are well trained. They provide extra phonics sessions to help pupils to become more confident readers. By December 2020, many pupils were more secure in using their phonic knowledge to read new words.
- Subject leaders overhauled the school's curriculum in the summer term 2020. They have started to put in place well-sequenced plans to help teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. This is making a difference, particularly in English, geography and history. Nevertheless, you recognise that some new subject leaders are in the early stages of finding out how well pupils are learning. They need more support to carry out their roles effectively.
- Leaders have made some effective adjustments to the curriculum. Staff are providing a range of carefully planned one-to-one and small-group support to pupils who need it, whether they are in school or learning remotely. For

example, in mathematics, extra sessions are helping pupils to become more confident in the recall of important facts and methods to solve problems. Pupils say that this is helping them to become better mathematicians.

- You have refined remote education in light of your evaluation from the first lockdown. Focused staff training has helped teachers to plan sequences of lessons that build on pupils' previous learning. You have ensured that any pupils who are not in school have an electronic device to access remote learning. You keep a close check on how well all pupils are taking part in lessons. For example, teachers have set up daily 'live keep up' sessions to support pupils who need extra help.
- You have high expectations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). You have carried out extensive training to increase staff expertise. Your work as the special educational needs coordinator is helping teachers to provide pupils with better support. Adults prioritise supporting younger pupils to develop their early speech and language skills, for example showing children how to form sentences. As a result, many pupils with SEND are becoming more confident writers.
- Governance is in a period of transition. Trust leaders and the former chair of the interim academy board are working closely with the new local governing body. This work is helping the governing body to understand the school's priorities. Governors have made a positive start in checking the impact of leaders' actions. For example, they have monitored how effectively leaders are using extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils' needs.
- You and your governors receive regular support and challenge from the trust. They have been instrumental in supporting you to put in place an effective remote education package. Trust leaders keep a close check on how well all pupils are receiving an education in the current circumstances. They continue to use other support, such as work with the local mathematics hub, to strengthen staff's expertise.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, the assistant headteacher, the education standards manager and director of education from the trust. We also held meetings with staff and governors to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at samples of pupils' work, reviewed documentation and talked to pupils. An inspector listened to pupils read. We looked at 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 11 free-text responses, and 16 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of Plymouth CAST multi-academy trust, the director of education for the diocese of Plymouth, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Dorset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dale Burr
Her Majesty's Inspector