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Nicola Brooke
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Dear Mrs Brooke

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Durweston CofE VA Primary School

Following my remote inspection of your school on 16 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 has received three successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in January 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 there is clear progression in all subjects of the curriculum so that pupils can build on prior learning and remember more.

Context

- A new chair of governors was appointed in September 2020.
- Approximately 66% of pupils were educated at home when the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term. Nearly 50% of vulnerable pupils and 66% of the pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans were attending on site.
- At the time of this inspection, 80% of pupils were attending on site. The Reception class had to self-isolate.
- Currently, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), the early years leader and two teaching assistants are absent due to COVID-19. The SENCo and early years leader are working from home so there is no disruption to children's learning.

Main findings

- Since your appointment in 2018, you have raised the expectations of pupils and staff. This was beneficial when pupils worked at home. You made sure that pupils received the same learning when in school and at home.
- When schools partially closed on 23 March 2020, you had devised a broad curriculum. However, evaluation of this curriculum halted because of COVID-19. Your current focus is on the sequencing of the curriculum so that pupils learn and remember more.
- Since pupils returned last week, leaders have made sure that pupils feel settled, understand school routines and are ready to learn. Teachers' assessment of pupils' knowledge will intensify in the next few weeks so that teachers can identify and close any gaps in learning.
- Reading is a priority in the school. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilful in teaching phonics. In the past week, the phonics leader has checked younger pupils' phonics knowledge. Pupils who are behind are benefiting from additional support so that they can catch up quickly. Books have been carefully chosen to match the letters and sounds learned in Reception and key stage 1. Teachers listen to key stage 2 pupils read regularly. This enables teachers to check that pupils' reading skills are progressing well. Teachers read to pupils to develop vocabulary and to help them to understand more complex texts.

- Teachers deliver remote learning effectively when needed. For instance, while Reception children are at home, the early years leader is providing online phonics teaching and storytelling daily, alongside other number and written work.
- The SENCo, and the governor responsible for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), work well together to ensure the needs of vulnerable pupils are met. The SENCo is painstaking in her approach to each pupil with SEND. She ensures teaching supports progress towards pupils' individual targets.
- You have had regular monitoring and support from the governing body's monthly meetings. The new chair of governors is accessing training so that he can provide further challenge as the school moves forward, especially in curriculum planning. Governors have provided effective advice to ensure that all pupils receive education during the current circumstances.
- Important external support for pupils with SEND has continued, often remotely. The local authority education challenge leader began working with you in January 2021. You are keen for her to find support for you from local schools, especially about the curriculum. You and your teachers will be able to access subject training from the diocese in the future.

Evidence

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

I looked at documentation provided by you and heard pupils read. I looked at 53 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 37 free-text responses, and 11 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks
Her Majesty's Inspector