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16 March 2021

Lindsay Evans
Executive headteacher
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Dear Mrs Evans

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Middleham Church of England Aided School

Following my remote inspection of your school on 25 February, 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in November 2018.

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 pupils learning from home receive similar opportunities for reading to those in school. This includes adults listening to pupils read and providing additional support to pupils in the early stages of learning to read.
- ensure that governors have the necessary skills to challenge and hold leaders to account for the quality of education provided to pupils.

Context

- Since the previous inspection several members of staff have left the school. This includes teachers and support staff. The headteacher is due to leave at the end of term. No permanent replacement has been made. Leaders told us that they are working with the local authority and the diocese to provide interim leadership from a local trust. One long standing governor has also left the school.
- A very small number of pupils had to work from home during the autumn term 2020.
- At the time of this inspection, almost all of those pupils who are vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are attending on site. Approximately one third of all pupils are attending school. The remaining pupils are accessing learning from home.

Main findings

- At the beginning of the first national lockdown in March 2020, you were in the process of re-writing the school's long-term curriculum plan. You have continued to make this a priority. You explained that the curriculum plan is currently being re-written to reflect class changes for September 2021. You and your staff are improving the curriculum including the development of reading. You are also making sure that pupils continue to access education under current circumstances.
- You and your staff know your families well. You have been able to ensure that those learning from home have access to appropriate technology. As a result, all pupils have access to online learning. Some pupils prefer to work from paper-based resources. These are made available for collection on a weekly basis.
- You provide the same curriculum for pupils at school and those learning remotely. Those pupils learning in school have access to additional adult support and interventions. Digital remote learning includes a mix of recorded and live lessons. You provide a weekly timetable for parents and pupils. This directs parents to live teaching sessions. Parents appreciate that you and your

staff have responded to their requests for advice and support in helping their children with their learning.

- You have prioritised the teaching of mathematics, English and phonics for all pupils, including children in the early years. Teachers use live lessons to support small groups of pupils and to address misunderstandings they might have. Where pupils are learning from home, you monitor their participation through their attendance at live lessons and through the work they complete.
- You told us that reading is an integral part of your curriculum. You have ensured that pupils in school who are in the early stages of learning to read have daily phonics sessions. Work is also underway to develop pupils' comprehension skills. Pupils learning from home have access to live phonics teaching and reading sessions. Parents are able to collect books from school on a weekly basis. However, teachers are not checking on the reading fluency of those learning from home. This includes struggling readers in key stage 2 as well as those in the early stages of learning to read. Extra support is available for those in school who need to catch up. This support is not available for those learning from home.
- Almost all vulnerable pupils are attending school. Where this is not the case, you make regular telephone calls to support pupils with their learning and well-being. If you are concerned about any of your pupils, they are offered a place in school.
- Leaders encourage pupils with SEND to attend on site where possible. You have ensured that their curriculum is carefully adapted to meet the needs of pupils learning at home and in school. For those pupils learning at home, extra resources are provided to support them with their work. These include physical mathematics resources such as number lines and number squares, paper resources and reading books.
- Governors check what action you and other leaders are taking to provide education for all pupils. However, they need to robustly hold leaders to account for the quality of education provided by the school. They are mindful of the well-being of staff and pupils under the current circumstances. Governors have continued to carry out their duties remotely. The chair of governors meets with the headteacher regularly to keep up to date with new developments and to check on safeguarding. Governors are aware that the school needs to focus on where it needs to improve. They are deciding upon approaches that they can take to offer support and challenge.
- Leaders are currently working with the local authority and the diocese to secure the appointment of a new headteacher. Officers from the local authority are also providing the school with practical support and guidance to improve the quality of education and to determine actions that leaders need to take next.

Evidence

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

I also looked at examples of pupils learning online and heard several pupils read to a known adult. I looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including seven free-text responses, and eight staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Gill Wild
Her Majesty's Inspector