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23 February 2021

Victoria Rayner  
Interim Headteacher  
St Matthew's Primary School  
Wenlock Street  
Luton  
LU2 0NJ

Dear Mrs Rayner

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Matthew's Primary School**

Following my remote inspection with Christine Dick, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 3 and 4 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. 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.**

## Context

- Since the previous inspection, the school's two assistant headteachers have been appointed as acting deputy headteachers. As the school's deputy headteacher, you were appointed as acting headteacher in March 2020 to cover the headteacher's maternity leave.
- Newly appointed subject leaders are undertaking curriculum responsibilities previously held by year group leaders. Four new governors have been appointed.
- During the autumn term 2020, about 25% of pupils experienced periods of remote education because of COVID-19.
- At the time of the inspection, approximately 85% of pupils were being educated at home. Almost all of the school's vulnerable pupils, and about two thirds of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who have an education, health and care plan are attending school on site.
- A very small number of pupils are attending the school's on-site 'Next Steps' behaviour support provision.

## Main findings

- Every pupil has been able to access the school's curriculum during the current period of national lockdown. Teachers have adapted lessons to help pupils learn when working remotely. Leaders have ensured that all pupils have a suitable device so they can take part in online lessons. You have helped pupils, teachers and parents understand how to get the best out of online learning. Teachers regularly check pupils' learning and well-being. They quickly tackle any emerging issues.
- You have made sure that pupils at home are able to study the same subject content as those at school. You have not narrowed the curriculum. Teachers have found imaginative ways to teach some of the more creative and practical aspects of subjects, including in the early years.
- You have made recent changes to the way remote learning works. These are based on research, your monitoring, and parents' feedback. The changes have boosted pupils' learning. Teachers are online during the day, checking pupils' work and offering regular feedback. Pupils take small steps to complete large tasks. They are not overwhelmed by having too much to think about at once. Teachers provide pupils with useful paper-based and electronic resources, such as recorded explanations and presentations. Pupils can watch these as often as they need to. This helps them to understand new things, and go back over previous learning that they found difficult.

- Leaders have improved the curriculum since the school's previous inspection. You introduced new curriculum plans in September 2020. Their implementation has been delayed due to the current lockdown restrictions. These plans set out some of the most important things that pupils need to know. You are reviewing how far pupils' learning by the end of key stage 2 prepares them for the next stage of their education. You plan further changes to curriculum content so that learning better prepares pupils for key stage 3.
- Leaders have started to improve the ways that teachers assess pupils' work. In mathematics, assessment helps teachers understand what pupils know and can do. Teachers use this information to plan what pupils should learn next or practise further. Teachers are less clear about what pupils have learned and can remember in subjects other than English and mathematics. Subject leaders are working to improve this.
- You are using your knowledge of pupils and their families to provide well-targeted help for those who need it. You are making sure that vulnerable pupils learn at school whenever possible. This includes those who attend the Next Steps provision. Teachers check in daily with vulnerable pupils who are working at home.
- Leaders are determined to enable all pupils to read well. You are promoting reading for pleasure, including by making online books available. Pupils enjoy the stories which teachers read them at the end of each day. Phonics lessons are continuing online as well as at school. You are showing parents how to help their children practise their reading. Some phonics teaching does not help pupils to develop their reading fluency well enough. You are arranging extra phonics training for staff so that everyone knows the best techniques to use.
- Leaders are ensuring that all pupils with SEND receive the support that they need to learn. Teachers have a good knowledge of pupils' needs and how to meet them. Pupils with SEND are learning the same curriculum as others because teachers make any necessary changes to lessons and learning resources.
- Governors value and support leaders and staff and hold them to account well. Governors are checking how effectively remote learning is working. They are prioritising support for vulnerable pupils. Governors meet with subject leaders regularly. This helps governors to find out what pupils are learning about, and how well they are doing.
- Local authority advisers' support is helping leaders to develop the school's curriculum. This work has had particular impact in English and mathematics.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held several meetings, including with the interim headteacher and other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, leaders with responsibility for the early years, subject leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. We also met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body, and two representatives of the local authority. Discussions focused on leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also sampled curriculum documents, minutes of governing body meetings, parents' responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and responses to the Ofsted staff survey. In addition, we looked at examples of online teaching resources, listened to a small number of pupils read and talk about their writing, and sampled recorded lessons and pupils' work. We also spoke with two groups of pupils and had telephone conversations with some parents.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Howard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**