

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Nick Sharp
Headteacher
Arnside National Church of England Primary School
Church Hill
Arnside
Lancashire
LA5 0DW

Dear Mr Sharp

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Arnside National Church of England Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Janette Walker, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 24 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 one judgement of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in March 2020.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) 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

- A new governor has been appointed to the governing body. An experienced member of the governing body has taken over the role of the safeguarding governor.
- Approximately two thirds of pupils were educated at home during the spring term 2021, before the school re-opened to all pupils. During the same period, around two thirds of vulnerable pupils and two thirds of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending school regularly.
- At the time of this inspection, all pupils were attending school.

Main findings

- Despite the impact of the pandemic, you and other leaders have forged ahead in establishing a curriculum that is well planned. In September 2020, you implemented your new curriculum throughout the school. Pupils now benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. The new curriculum enables pupils to learn well from home or in school. As a result, you and other leaders have ensured that all pupils receive an education in the current circumstances.
- You have taken effective action to ensure that staff develop their expertise in how to deliver your planned curriculum remotely, as required. When the school partially closed at the start of the spring term 2021, teachers moved seamlessly to delivering the curriculum online. Appropriate systems are now in place for any pupil who still needs to access their education at home due to self-isolation.
- You and other leaders have taken appropriate steps to ensure that in each subject curriculum plans set out the important knowledge that pupils must learn. Leaders have also thought carefully about the order in which new content is taught. Following the partial closure of schools at the start of the spring term 2021, teachers made sensible adaptations to the order in which the curriculum was taught. This was effective in making learning more manageable for those pupils working at home. For example, in art and design, older pupils studied a unit on photography instead of a unit on clay.
- In mathematics, improvements to the curriculum are particularly noteworthy. Whether learning at home or in school, pupils are progressing well through the mathematics curriculum. Through their appropriate checks on pupils' learning, teachers have made some careful adaptations to the order of learning in this subject. For example, they have prioritised the development of pupils' arithmetic skills. Teachers provide regular and effective feedback to those pupils who are working at home. The pupils told us that they valued this feedback.

- Throughout the pandemic, senior leaders have maintained a sharp focus on implementing the reading curriculum. Children in the Reception Year and pupils in Years 1 and 2 rehearse their phonics daily. Teachers check carefully on how well pupils learn their phonic knowledge, and adapt their teaching accordingly. Those pupils who struggle with their reading continue to receive additional support at home or in school. Older pupils practise their comprehension skills by reading appropriate books and online texts. Pupils spoke passionately about reading.
- Now that all pupils have returned to school, teachers are checking the knowledge that pupils know and remember in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers are using this information effectively to plan additional support for pupils who have fallen behind. For example, children in the Reception Year are having additional time to practise their counting and number facts.
- Vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEND have accessed the same curriculum as everyone else. The special educational needs coordinator, teachers and teaching assistants have all worked well together to adapt learning carefully for these pupils. During the period when the school was closed to most pupils, those vulnerable pupils attending school benefited from being with their class teacher. Staff also kept a careful eye on the well-being of vulnerable pupils working at home.
- Governors know the school well. Throughout the pandemic, governors have worked effectively to support you to make appropriate decisions. You and the governing body have ensured that the well-being of everyone has remained a top priority. Despite the challenging circumstances, governors have carried on with their wider strategic responsibilities to ensure that the school continues to improve. As a result, pupils are learning well.
- You value the support that you receive from a range of partners. The local mathematics hub continues to provide effective support. It is helping to assess the effectiveness of the new mathematics curriculum. A governor has provided training to upskill staff in the use of the online system to deliver remote education. This has been instrumental in developing teachers' confidence in delivering remote education, particularly to older pupils.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you and the deputy headteacher, a group of subject leaders and representatives of the governing body. We also spoke with a representative of the Diocese of Carlisle to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We considered a range of documentation provided by you and other leaders, including curriculum plans, samples of pupils' work and minutes of the governing

body meetings. We spoke with a group of older pupils and observed a group of younger pupils read to a trusted adult. We spoke with a small number of parents by telephone. We reviewed the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including the 45 free-text responses. We also reviewed the 14 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

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

Yours sincerely

Garry White
Her Majesty's Inspector