

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



16 February 2021

Claire Bailey
Principal
John Smeaton Academy
Smeaton Approach, Barwick Road
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS15 8TA

Dear Mrs Bailey

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of John Smeaton Academy

Following my remote inspection with Deborah Mosley, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 27 and 28 January 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 have serious weaknesses.

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 was judged to have serious weaknesses at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place 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.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has left. You were appointed in January 2020. A vice principal was appointed in September 2020. Following the inspection, 31 staff left and 20 have been appointed, including a special educational needs coordinator. The trust also replaced the governing body with a 'School Improvement Board' (SIB).
- Across the autumn term 2020, approximately 80% of pupils had to be educated remotely at some point, especially in Years 9 to 11. One 'bubble' in Year 9 had to be educated remotely on two occasions.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately 5% of pupils, including those with SEND and those who are vulnerable, were being educated on site.
- At the time of this inspection, a very small proportion of staff were absent due to COVID-19. You are managing this with a small amount of teacher cover and a staff rota system.

Main findings

- At all levels of leadership, everyone is on the same page to ensure that pupils receive an education in the current circumstances. Staff told us that they feel well supported by leaders.
- The SIB demonstrates a strong understanding of its role in governance. Members of the SIB are knowledgeable about education and school improvement, and have the skills required to support leaders in the current circumstances. They have initiated a substantial level of support and challenge around vital priorities such as developing the remote learning curriculum, implementing a behaviour policy and supporting leaders in improving engagement with remote learning.
- As a member of a multi-academy trust, you are following the trust's curriculum for remote learning. Pre-pandemic, the curriculum was thought through in terms of its subject content and the order in which units would be taught. Since the pandemic, your subject leaders have been supported by the trust's subject advisers to adapt the curriculum where necessary, due to COVID-19 restrictions. In creative and practical subjects, for instance, leaders have made changes to the curriculum to allow for such limitations.
- You have done much to deliver your remote curriculum as 'live' lessons, following the timetable which was in place pre-lockdown. You have ensured that pupils have access to the necessary equipment so that they can access the live lessons. Your ambition in providing your curriculum is reflective of your determination that pupils will receive an effective education.

- There is a little variability in the delivery of the remote curriculum, however. Pupils told inspectors, for instance, that at times the lessons felt 'standalone' rather than part of a sequence where knowledge and skills build up over time. There is more to do to ensure that pupils' work, especially 'independent study', is assessed and that pupils receive feedback. You have identified this as an area to develop and have already taken steps to address it.
- At the start of the current academic year, leaders took the decision that most Year 11 students were able to no longer study Spanish, to allow more time for English, mathematics and science. Otherwise, Year 11 pupils' subjects remain as they were in Year 10. You have taken appropriate action to support Year 11 in following the trust's assessment calendar, so that their work can be evaluated.
- Leaders' ambition to support pupils in their reading is laudable. You have taken action recently to make the teaching of reading a priority. You have decided to do this through a commercially available reading programme. This may help some pupils but, currently, due to the effects of the pandemic, the staff involved in delivering the programme have not been trained in the teaching of reading. This will limit the effectiveness of the programme.
- We agree that support for pupils with SEND is an area which requires strengthening. Currently, there is little support and challenge for SEND leadership and provision at a senior level, including from the trust. As a result, while the strategies to support pupils with SEND are made available to staff, their incorporation into the delivery of remote learning is currently not thought through very much. Pupils told inspectors that before the pandemic, teachers were skilled and diligent in their support for pupils with SEND, but that with remote learning, this is much less the case.
- The trust has provided effective support for senior leaders and subject leaders in the provision of a remote curriculum in the current circumstances. Leaders have felt confident in adapting the curriculum with the trust's guidance.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the principal and other senior leaders; the trust regional director; members of the SIB responsible for governance; subject leaders; a group of staff and two groups of pupils, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also 'visited' recorded 'live' lessons, including a reading support lesson, sampled examples of work completed by pupils remotely, and reviewed a wide range of school documentation.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the United Learning multi-academy trust, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Leeds. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Shaw
Her Majesty's Inspector