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16 February 2021

Adam Evans  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Evans

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Minehead First School**

Following my remote inspection with Julie Carrington, 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 require special measures.

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 require special measures at its previous section 5 inspection(s). The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in April 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

- The school opened the pre-school in September 2020. It has, therefore, extended its age range, which now runs from two- to nine-year-olds. Two new governors have been appointed to the local governing board.
- In autumn term 2020, approximately three quarters of pupils experienced periods of remote education because of COVID-19. This included all pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4, as well as individual pupils in other year groups.
- At the time of this inspection, the school was open to vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers. Approximately three quarters of pupils are learning remotely, and the rest come into school. Around 80% of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are learning remotely.
- At the time of this inspection, a small number of staff were absent due to COVID-19.

## Main findings

- Since the previous monitoring inspection in February 2020, you have continued to motivate staff, raise expectations of pupils, and secure a positive 'can-do' culture in the school. When the school closed in the spring term of 2020, you were already working with leaders to improve the school's curriculum. Following the first school closure, leaders identified five priorities to improve remote education. These have been coupled with appropriate adaptations to the school's curriculum, in order to meet pupils' needs.
- Curriculum leaders are developing their plans well. In most subjects, leaders know what they want pupils to learn. Leaders sequence knowledge in the right order. The plans in some subjects are further ahead than others. For example, strengths in English, mathematics and science are not yet fully reflected in art.
- Leaders have adapted the curriculum during the period of COVID-19 in order to meet the needs of pupils, including children in the early years foundation stage. For example, in mathematics, leaders have focused on what pupils must know about numbers and place value, so that pupils who have fallen behind can catch up. Staff provide tutoring for pupils who need extra help, including pupils with SEND. This support is provided regardless of whether pupils are in school or learning from home.
- You have ensured that vulnerable pupils and children of key workers who are not in school have a laptop and the hardware needed to access remote education.
- Leaders describe reading activities as 'sacred' and continue to make reading a top priority. All pupils in the Reception year and key stage 1 have a daily

phonics lesson. The pre-school children explore appropriate sounds and language for communication, such as rhymes, in readiness to start learning how to read.

- Leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), are taking the right action to improve the quality of care and education for pupils with SEND. Since the previous monitoring inspection, you have continued to review the needs of these pupils. However, there are still a few cases where pupils do not have sufficiently precise targets.
- Throughout the pandemic, trustees and governors have maintained regular contact with you. For example, the chief executive officer (CEO) and the chair of the trust board hold weekly catch-up calls with you. Governors have provided an appropriate balance of support and challenge. You have found this to be useful, particularly to support staff workload and well-being. Governors have played a critical role in supporting staff to make sure that pupils can access education in the current circumstances.
- The school has drawn on the wider support of the trust to improve the curriculum and develop teachers' expertise. For example, subject leaders attend trust network meetings. You also use an external phonics consultant to maintain improvements in early reading.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, such as those responsible for the curriculum and the early years, and the SENCo. Inspectors also met with the subject leaders for mathematics, English, art and science. The lead inspector met with trust leaders, including the chair of the trust board and the CEO.

Inspectors spoke with pupils from Years 3 and 4 about their experiences during COVID-19 and their learning. Inspectors reviewed documents provided by the school, including curriculum and subject plans, and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also observed some pupils from different year groups read aloud to an adult.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the West Somerset Academies trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stewart Gale  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**