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Gregg Morrison
Principal
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Dear Mr Morrison

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Preston School Academy

Following my remote inspection with Tracey Reynolds, 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 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 June 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 September 2019, one senior leader, one subject leader and a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) have been appointed. A new chair of the governing body was appointed in December 2020.
- During the autumn term of 2020, approximately two thirds of pupils had to spend some time working from home. Pupils' attendance was not significantly affected by COVID-19 in the first half of the autumn term. However, in the weeks leading up to Christmas, each of Years 9, 10 and 11 had to spend some time at home.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately 9% of pupils are being educated on site. About one quarter of these are vulnerable pupils or pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Senior leaders are not facing significant staffing issues at this time. Four teachers are unable to attend the school site because of COVID-19. However, some of these teachers are able to work from home.

Main findings

- You and your senior leadership team have taken appropriate action to make sure that pupils continue to receive an education throughout the current circumstances. Remote education or on-site tuition is available to all pupils.
- Following the previous inspection, you restructured the leadership team's responsibilities. This placed a greater emphasis on staff development. For example, you introduced a coaching programme for teachers. Consequently, there is greater consistency in teachers' classroom practice.
- You, and your senior team, worked to enhance the curriculum through the autumn term of 2019. Subject leaders considered what pupils are taught and when. This resulted in improvements in the curriculum, particularly in science and mathematics. Senior leaders decided to change the curriculum structure in Year 9. In future, pupils will experience the full range of subjects until the end of Year 9. The new arrangements have been delayed and are planned to begin in September 2021.
- Senior leaders have made adjustments to the curriculum as part of their response to COVID-19. For example, in some subjects they changed the order in which units of work are taught. You have considered carefully pupils' personal, social, health and economic education programme. Teachers are prioritising elements of the course most relevant to the current circumstances, such as pupils' understanding of online safety.
- Teachers are making detailed checks on pupils' knowledge in each subject, so they are able to identify where pupils have missed out on learning. Teachers

have found that some pupils are not reading as much as they once were and are, therefore, encouraging more pupils to read at home. Even so, reading is still a barrier for a minority of pupils. Year 11 pupils have studied their GCSE or BTEC courses throughout the period of disruption. Teachers are planning revision sessions for these pupils to help them to remain motivated.

- You made digital learning a priority in September 2019. Therefore, the school had a well-established online learning platform to use when the school was closed to most pupils for the first time in March 2020. Senior leaders provided further training for staff about remote education during the autumn term of 2020. This has enabled teachers to increase the range of digital resources that they use. Pupils are using a rich variety of digital and paper-based resources.
- Pastoral staff are in regular contact with pupils, especially those who might be vulnerable. These pupils, and the children of critical workers, are educated on the school site. They have access to computers and extra support. They follow the same curriculum as other pupils.
- The recently appointed SENCo has begun work to ensure that teachers understand how to support pupils with SEND. This work is at an early stage. The SENCo is helping teaching assistants to improve their skills. Teachers and teaching assistants are becoming more confident in identifying pupils' individual needs and supporting them.
- The governing board has a wide set of skills. Governors have focused successfully on securing the well-being of all staff, including you and your senior team. The governance review, recommended at the previous inspection, was delayed and has only recently concluded. Governors recognise that their knowledge of school performance measures is not deep enough. There is not yet a wide understanding across the governing body of some aspects of the school's work, such as the impact of pupil premium funding.
- Over the last year, the school has received effective support from The Priory Learning Trust. This has improved subject leadership and the curriculum, especially in English, mathematics, science and design and technology.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the principal, vice principal and other senior leaders. We met with a selection of curriculum leaders and teachers. The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and one other governor to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also considered responses to the Ofsted Parent View website, the school's own surveys of staff, parents' and pupils' views. We scrutinised a range of documentation

including curriculum plans and minutes of governors' meetings. We also considered a sample of remote education materials and pupils' work.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector