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Dear Dr Cook

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Liskeard Hillfort Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Sarah McGinnis, 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 October 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

- There have been relatively few staffing changes since the previous inspection. The school has made a teaching appointment and appointed additional staff to support pupils' welfare and learning. One member of the trust board stepped down earlier in the year and a replacement is being appointed.
- In the autumn term 2020, very few pupils had to spend time learning from home. No classes or 'bubbles' had to isolate because of COVID-19.
- This spring term 2021, approximately three quarters of pupils are learning remotely. Since the school partially closed on 5 January 2021, two thirds of vulnerable pupils have continued to attend school. Only a few pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are attending on site.
- At the time of this inspection, very few staff were absent due to COVID-19.

Main findings

- Until the school partially closed to pupils in March 2020, senior leaders had focused on forging a shared sense of purpose among the staff. Leaders were supported by the trust and external consultants in this. As a result of leaders' work, staff are now united in their drive to improve the quality of education. Also during this period, leaders had worked on developing teachers' expertise, particularly in early reading and mathematics.
- Since March 2020, leaders have focused mainly on the introduction of remote education and, subsequently, improving its quality. Alongside this, leaders have continued their work to improve the quality of mathematics education and the effectiveness of the school's approach to teaching reading. Although work to improve the quality of education in other subjects has begun, it is early days. Some curriculum leaders do not have as secure an understanding of their subject as they need.
- Curriculum leaders have adapted the school's curriculum to make sure that pupils are able to continue with their learning, whether at home or in school. Leaders have reduced the amount of content that pupils learn. However, leaders have made sure that the most important knowledge that pupils need is still covered. Leaders have also reordered some topics. They are looking at the effects of this on pupils' learning carefully.
- Leaders have continued to prioritise reading and foster pupils' love of reading. Pupils who had fallen behind in their reading have benefited from extra teaching. Some have already caught up. Leaders have allocated extra time in the school day to make sure that younger pupils have enough time to learn and practise their phonics. Pupils at home use online resources that are matched to their ability and the school's approach to reading.
- Leaders have encouraged vulnerable pupils to attend school during the current COVID-19 restrictions. A high proportion are attending. Staff are in regular contact with vulnerable pupils who are learning from home. Specialist

staff and external agencies are providing additional emotional support for pupils who need it.

- Leaders have a secure understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND. School staff keep in close contact with parents so that parents know how to support their children. Leaders have made sure that pupils who are learning at home have the specialist equipment they need.
- Trustees and local governors have an accurate overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Local governors continue to meet together remotely. They also meet with members of school staff regularly. This has allowed governors to monitor developments and to offer some challenge to leaders' decisions. Trustees are acutely aware of staff welfare and have allocated additional resources to support staff. Trustees are also working with leaders to ensure that staff have a manageable workload.
- Leaders and school staff are being supported by a number of external consultants. Such input has been matched well to the initial needs that leaders identified. This support has provided a secure base on which to build the next phase of improvements.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, staff and pupils. We also met with the chief executive officer and director of education of the Truro and Penwith Academy Trust, the vice-chair of the board of trustees and a member of the local governing group. In these meetings, we discussed leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also reviewed school policies and other documentation, including minutes of the local governors' group meetings. We looked at pupils' work and sampled some teaching sessions which had been recorded. Inspectors took parents' views into account through responses to Parent View and other communications from parents.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Truro and Penwith Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Iain Freeland
Her Majesty's Inspector