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Ruth Craven
Principal
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Dear Mrs Craven

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Copley Academy

Following my remote inspection with Alyson Middlemass, 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. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in October 2018.

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.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- ensure that the curriculum content is well chosen, sequenced and adapted in those subjects that are at an earlier stage of development. This is to enable pupils to build on their knowledge over time.

Context

- The current principal was appointed as principal designate from June 2020 and took up the substantive post in September 2020. Eight teachers, including the vice principal and two subject leaders, joined the school in September. There is a new chair of the local governing committee (LGC).
- During autumn term 2020, almost all pupils were educated remotely for short periods of time. This included all of the pupils in Year 8, Year 10 and Year 11.
- At the time of this inspection, all bar a few pupils were being educated at home. Approximately two thirds of pupils who are identified as vulnerable continue to receive their education on site. Almost all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are being educated at school.
- At the time of this inspection, leaders were not having to manage significant staff absence. A small minority of staff are absent due to COVID-19.

Main findings

- Before schools partially closed in March 2020, leaders were focused on improving the curriculum in all subjects. You have since worked with leaders to raise staff's expectations of what pupils should learn. In recent months, you have made sure that subject curriculums have been adapted so that they can be delivered in classrooms as well as to those pupils who have to work remotely. The steps that you have taken mean that all pupils are being provided with education in the current circumstances. Many parents and carers are pleased with the education that their children are currently receiving.
- Subject leaders are continuing to review the content of their curriculums to check what pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn it. You know that some subject curriculum plans are not as far ahead as others. These subject curriculums require further refinement to ensure that the content pupils learn is sequenced and revisited.
- Leaders are making sure that vulnerable pupils study the same curriculum as other pupils. Pastoral staff keep in regular contact with vulnerable pupils. They check with these pupils that they have access to an electronic device to work at home and offer support when needed.

- The special educational needs coordinator is working with staff to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Staff receive clearer information on how to support these pupils. You have taken effective steps to ensure that pupils with SEND can continue to access a broad curriculum during national restrictions, both in school and when they are at home.
- Pupils who spoke with us during the inspection said that they enjoy coming to school. They value the help that they receive. Year 9 pupils feel well supported with careers advice, including the guidance that they receive about choosing GCSE option subjects.
- Pupils are provided with extra opportunities for reading through form time. Leaders are prioritising additional lessons for pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read. You provide pupils with access to online books so that they can practise their reading skills while at school or at home.
- Pupils in Year 11 have personalised support to ensure that they study all of the subjects that they should. You have provided effective training for staff to develop 'live' lessons for Year 11 pupils. Teachers have adapted curriculum plans carefully to engage Year 11 pupils when they are working at home. Teachers check that pupils complete work that has been set and they provide pupils with feedback to support their learning.
- The chief executive officer (CEO) and governors are supporting and challenging you well. They hold regular discussions with you and senior leaders to check the delivery of remote education. Governors have ensured that almost all pupils have access to electronic devices. They also spent time examining the curriculum plans to assure themselves that pupils are receiving an education during the current circumstances.
- The newly appointed director of education of the trust, together with education consultants from the trust, are helping subject leaders to improve the design and delivery of subject curriculums. This is already developing subject leaders' expertise well.
- The local authority continues to provide useful advice and guidance which is helping you with school improvement. A specialist leader of education from a local school is supporting the languages department. This is having a positive impact in developing curriculum plans in this subject.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. Inspectors held meetings with you, other senior leaders, three groups of subject leaders, two groups of staff, the director of education at the Great Academy Education Trust (GAET), two consultants from GAET, the CEO, the chair of the LGC, the chair of the board of trustees and a representative of the local authority. This was to discuss leaders' actions to provide

education to all pupils during a national lockdown. In addition, inspectors held discussions with two groups of pupils.

Inspectors also carried out a review of the curriculum that pupils are receiving. This included the arrangements for delivering the curriculum remotely. A range of documentation was also examined, including curriculum plans, minutes of governing body meetings and over 30 comments that parents have shared with school leaders. Inspectors also considered the 57 parent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

I am copying this letter to the to the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO of GAET, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Tameside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector