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Rachel Purvis
Headteacher
William Rhodes Primary & Nursery School
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Dear Mrs Purvis

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of William Rhodes Primary & Nursery School

Following my remote inspection with Roary Pownall, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 3 and 4 February 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in April 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:

- develop further an effective system to
 - check on a daily basis that all pupils are engaging with their work
 - check regularly that pupils are learning and remembering knowledge in all taught subjects, including phonics.

Context

- Since the last inspection, there have been changes to the structure of the senior leadership team. An acting co-headteacher has been appointed for two days a week and the substantive headteacher is employed for three days a week. A deputy headteacher has been appointed for two days a week. There is no longer an assistant headteacher role.
- During the autumn term 2020, approximately two fifths of pupils were educated remotely at some point. This included the closing of the Reception Year 'bubble'.
- Approximately a quarter of pupils are currently being educated on site. The majority of vulnerable pupils and one third of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are attending on site.
- Currently, a small number of staff are absent due to COVID-19. This is not having a significant impact on the education the school provides.

Main findings

- You and your leadership team are taking the necessary actions to make sure pupils continue to receive an education at this time of national lockdown. You have ensured that education for English, including phonics, mathematics, music and art is provided for pupils studying at school or at home. You plan to increase the range of subjects to help pupils catch up with missed learning.
- You have continued your work to improve the curriculum. Subject leaders have been reviewing the content of the different subjects and planning how learning will be best sequenced. Leaders have established a schedule of actions to check the consistency of the education the school offers. This is enabling them to identify what is working well and what needs further improvement. Staff we met with remotely are unanimous in their positive view of the support of senior leaders and say morale is high.
- The school offers daily class meetings using remote technology. These are opportunities for teachers to check the engagement with learning of the pupils who attend these meetings and look at pupils' work. Teachers may provide individual support, and if they have any concerns, these are followed

up swiftly. However, the school does not have an effective system to check that all pupils engage with their work on a daily basis. There is not an effective system to regularly check what pupils have learned in different subjects, and where appropriate, provide timely feedback. Leaders and staff cannot be sure that pupils understand what they are learning

- You have ensured that improving reading is of high priority. Since the last inspection, a new phonics programme has been introduced. Teachers in the early years and key stage 1 make sure that pupils in the school and at home continue with phonics lessons every day. Staff identify and support those who are falling behind. However, because there is not an effective system for checking pupils' learning, staff are not as sure as they could be that pupils are secure in their phonic knowledge.
- You provide support for vulnerable pupils that is often bespoke. This includes, for example, helping pupils and parents and carers to access the curriculum, and providing support to manage behaviour or access specialist help. Leaders and other staff, including the family support worker, check how well vulnerable pupils are doing on an individual basis.
- Leaders ensure that the education and support for pupils with SEND is organised well. They have established a system to identify these pupils' needs, provide relevant support, and check that the pupils are accessing and learning the curriculum.
- Governors are positive, supportive and ambitious for the school. They hold regular meetings with leaders and examine the information leaders provide. Governors have a sound oversight of the school's work and understand their role to support and challenge the school to improve.
- You have welcomed the support and challenge provided by the local authority. This has included the involvement of a national leader of education and staff training to support the development of the curriculum. Staff have also benefited from links with other schools and networks. The leader for mathematics, for example, has worked with a mathematics hub to help develop a consistent approach to teaching mathematics across the school.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject and middle leaders, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance, and a representative of the local authority, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. We also looked at examples of the work set for pupils, documents relating to the work of the governing body, and the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the staff and pupil questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

John Lawson
Her Majesty's Inspector