

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



24 February 2021

Jonathan Bell
Principal
Werneth Primary School
Coppice Street
Oldham
Lancashire
OL8 4BL

Dear Mr Bell

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Werneth Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Julie Barlow, 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 at its previous section 5 inspections. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in May 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.

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

- implement all aspects of the revised curriculum in art and design and technology.

Context

- You joined the school as principal in September 2020. Five new teachers have also joined the school since the last inspection. There is a new chair of the local governing body and three other new governors have been appointed.
- During the autumn term 2020, over three quarters of pupils had to be educated remotely at some point. This was due to periods of self-isolation as a result of COVID-19. This affected most year groups in the school.
- At the time of this inspection, about three quarters of pupils were being educated from home. Almost all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who are vulnerable, including international new arrivals, were attending school.
- At the time of this inspection, there were a small number of staff absent due to COVID-19. Leaders redeployed staff from elsewhere in the school to ensure that pupils' learning was not affected.

Main findings

- You, the staff team, and the school governors are working effectively to provide education for all pupils in the current circumstances. Teachers are delivering most of the usual lessons to pupils in school and those studying remotely. You and the leadership team remain focused on school improvement and the development of your new curriculum.
- By the start of the pandemic, the school's curriculum was only in the early stages of development. This delay was due to a long period of turbulence in leadership. This has now been addressed and the pace of improvement has increased.
- Since the pandemic began, you and the leadership team have prioritised the development of the English, mathematics, history and geography curriculums. These curriculums are now successfully in place. Leaders are continually revising the knowledge that pupils need to learn in these subjects. This is so that the content becomes more ambitious. Curriculum leaders said that they feel invigorated and renewed by their increased responsibility for pupils' learning.
- Despite the improvements in some subjects, there remains work to do in other curriculum areas. For example, aspects of the curriculum in art and

design and technology are yet to be rolled out. You also have plans to restart the music and languages curriculums as soon as possible.

- You are prioritising reading. You have thought carefully about how best to teach reading during this current time. For example, children in early years who are studying from home engage in a daily phonics video session which their class teacher delivers. This means they are keeping pace with the letters and sounds that you expect them to know at this point in the year. Pupils in school enjoy hearing stories that adults read to them every day. You intend to offer a similar story time to those pupils who are studying remotely.
- You and your leadership team are adapting the curriculum so that pupils can access their education remotely. There are many challenges in delivering this provision, but you listen with understanding and sensitivity to parents and carers. Your high expectations and willingness to try to reduce the barriers that many families face in delivering education at home have been a success. For example, pupils' engagement in remote education has risen.
- Pupils who were in school during the inspection told us that they were doing similar activities to those studying remotely. They said that they were enjoying their learning and felt well looked after.
- You and your staff contact those vulnerable pupils still studying from home and are quick to act if you have concerns. For example, staff offer additional support with learning and they bring pupils who do not engage in remote education into school.
- You ensure that pupils with SEND receive a similar education to what they would normally experience. They are following their individual personalised plans and, when needed, they receive additional support from an adult. The small number of pupils with SEND who are not in school are checked on daily.
- The chair of the local governing body and representatives of The Pinnacle Learning multi-academy trust (MAT) keep in regular contact with you. They have provided appropriate support to you and the staff during the pandemic. The local governing body monitors the improvements to the curriculum, including remote education. The local governing body is effective in holding you to account and quick to act when support is needed. For example, it has agreed to the allocation of additional funding to buy more electronic devices so that pupils can access their learning while they are at home.
- Just prior to the last inspection, the school was rebrokered to a new MAT. This provided an opportunity to refocus priorities for school improvement. The school has benefited from internal support from the MAT and external support from the local authority. Training has included leadership development and curriculum development, which have supported school improvement effectively.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, the vice-principal, curriculum leaders and representatives from the MAT and the local governing body. We also spoke to teachers and a small group of pupils to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We looked at samples of pupils' work, observed some remote lessons and scrutinised documents relating to leadership and the curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of The Pinnacle Learning multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oldham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Eastwood
Her Majesty's Inspector