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23 February 2021

Charlotte Angeli
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Angeli

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Holdbrook Primary School and Nursery

Following my remote inspection with Damian Loneragan, 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 February 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.

Context

- Since the previous section 5 inspection, the previous headteacher has left the school and, following a period of interim leadership, you were appointed as headteacher. The current deputy headteacher, special educational needs leader and leader for the early years have all been appointed since the previous section 5 inspection.
- Across the autumn term 2020, approximately 15% of pupils had to isolate at home, including some pupils in a Year 5 class 'bubble'.
- This term, 17% of the school population is attending on site, approximately half of these are vulnerable pupils; 37% of all pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are attending on site. At the time of this inspection 15 pupils who usually attend on site were isolating at home.
- One in five of the school staff are currently working from home because of COVID-19 measures. However, all teachers continue to deliver remote education, either from home or from the school building.
- The Nursery is not currently open. However, all of the children who would usually attend have been offered a place on site. You plan to review this, to consider opening the Nursery in the future.

Main findings

- You and other leaders have developed the school's approach to providing education during this national lockdown, both remotely and in school. It continues to develop to meet the emerging needs of pupils and their families, and as you enhance and build on the school's provision. There is a consistent understanding among staff about what needs to be done to maintain education during this time. Staff are very positive about your leadership and the support they receive. They also work collaboratively to share tips and new ideas.
- You have set clear expectations for remote education. All year groups have a range of teaching and learning activities each day. Pupils complete work in reading, writing and mathematics as well as in the other subjects across the curriculum. They have daily live sessions with their teachers, along with pre-recorded video lessons, including from national providers. The very small proportion of parents who shared their views with inspectors were positive about the school and the education that staff are currently providing.
- Where pupils are not engaging in learning from home, staff are diligent and persistent in contacting families to encourage and coax their participation. For some of these pupils, you have offered places on site. The pastoral team works closely with families to encourage them to take advantage of this offer or to provide other means of support.

- Prior to March 2020, leaders reviewed the curriculum. Planned changes are in the early stages of implementation and the curriculum continues to develop. You have focused particularly on developing an effective reading curriculum, which is a key priority for the school, and teachers continue to deliver the key elements of the reading curriculum remotely. Children in the early years have regular phonics teaching which matches what they would usually learn in school. Teachers provide pupils with appropriate reading books, and teachers read to their pupils daily. Older pupils are encouraged to read at home, with access to real books or online libraries.
- Leaders have adapted parts of the curriculum, for instance in practical subjects, where the necessary resources may not be easily available or provided by the school. In the main, pupils are following their usual curriculum, albeit with more time spent on reinforcing key knowledge and a measured approach to introducing new concepts, particularly in mathematics.
- You have set clear expectations for teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers provide regular and helpful feedback to pupils on the work they complete. They use a range of checks, including reviewing pupils' work, talking to pupils and using quizzes to assess pupils' progress through the curriculum. However, you recognise that there is more to do to have a clearer understanding of how well pupils are learning.
- Leaders have a strong understanding of the needs of pupils who require additional support. Whether learning in school or at home, pupils with SEND are given support and guidance from staff to enable them to learn effectively. Staff maintain regular contact with pupils with SEND and their parents. Staff adjust pupils' learning activities, where necessary, to ensure that these pupils can follow the planned curriculum.
- Members of the governing body are well informed. They continue to support and challenge school leaders during their regular meetings. They are supporting you to work with your staff to overcome any barriers to learning during this period. Governors also keep a watchful eye on the workload of staff, and particularly of school leaders.
- School improvement partners have provided helpful support to strengthen the curriculum, including in the early years. The next stage of evaluating the impact of this support has been delayed.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely by two HMI. We held meetings to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. We met with you and other senior leaders, pupils, teachers and support staff, as well as members of the governing body. We also met with two school improvement advisers who provide support to the school. We also considered the very small number of

free-text responses to the Parent View survey and spoke to parents on the telephone.

We made visits to online teaching sessions, scrutinised online teaching and learning resources, reviewed examples of pupils' work and heard pupils read to members of staff. We considered the 33 responses to the staff questionnaire.

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

Yours sincerely

Michelle Winter
Her Majesty's Inspector