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Elizabeth Gunnion
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Gunnion

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Linacre Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Jackie Stillings, 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 June 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:

- provide more guidance for parents and carers on how to support their children's learning in the basic skills of English and mathematics
- implement systems to monitor the quality of teachers' assessments and the feedback they give to pupils who are accessing the curriculum remotely.

Context

- A new chair of the governing body has been appointed since the school was last inspected in June 2019.
- Across the autumn term, more than half of the pupils on roll experienced periods of remote education because of COVID-19.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately three quarters of pupils were being educated at home. Almost three quarters of all the vulnerable pupils were in school. Almost three quarters of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were on site.
- At the time of this inspection, a small number of staff were absent due to COVID-19. Leaders are not facing any significant challenges in managing this situation.

Main findings

- Prior to March 2020, you had started to revise the curriculum so that plans in each subject included the knowledge that pupils would learn. Since March 2020, you, governors and staff made sure that all pupils can continue with their education. As a result of your actions, appropriate on-site and remote education is available to all pupils.
- You implemented a variety of professional training activities for staff to increase their subject knowledge and leadership skills. For example, staff received training in English, mathematics, physical education and music to help them become more confident in teaching these subjects. Staff use online training to develop their subject leadership roles. They have also visited other schools in the locality to observe and learn from other colleagues. Consequently, some subject leaders are more confident and competent in leading their subjects.
- More pupils are now learning at home than in school. Leaders successfully changed the order in which some subject content is taught so that pupils can build learning steadily. For example, in mathematics, leaders prioritised pupils' learning in money and measurement so that pupils can use resources readily available at home. In some subjects, such as reading and phonics, pupils

cover the same learning as their friends in school so that they do not fall behind.

- Leaders make sure that vulnerable pupils continue to be taught all curriculum subjects, whether they are in school or accessing remote education. Leaders work well with the local authority to ensure that these pupils have the devices that they need to access the curriculum at home. Any issues with pupils engaging with remote education are swiftly followed up by leaders.
- Teaching all pupils, including vulnerable pupils, to become confident, fluent readers is a priority. All pupils have daily phonics lessons. Pupils in school have direct teaching in phonics from staff, while pupils at home access pre-recorded phonics lessons from a commercial scheme that reflect what is being taught in school. Younger pupils, including those in the early years, use decodable books online to help consolidate their phonic knowledge and foster their love of reading.
- The older pupils talk confidently about their favourite authors. Class teachers choose online books for these pupils to read independently during the daily 'read and relax' sessions. This helps pupils to develop their fluency in reading and regain their love of reading for pleasure.
- Leaders' approach to the delivery of remote education is improving. However, not enough guidance is given to parents to help them to support their children's basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Furthermore, there are no systems in place for leaders to check the quality of teachers' assessments and the feedback that they give to pupils on their learning.
- Leaders and staff have developed a close working relationship with the parents of pupils with SEND. Leaders make appropriate adaptations to the curriculum to ensure that pupils with SEND learn all subjects in the curriculum. Staff have had some training to ensure they understand how to support these pupils, both educationally and emotionally.
- Governors want the best for all pupils. They have a clear understanding of the impact that COVID-19 has on the school community. Governors meet with you and other leaders frequently to enable them to monitor the improvements in the school.
- Governors make regular checks on staff's workload and their emotional well-being. They know what the school does well and what needs to improve, with particular regard to the curriculum. In essence, governors offer support and challenge in equal measure.
- You are receptive to both internal and external support. The support that the local authority and the English and mathematics hubs have given leaders has helped them to make some improvements to the curriculum. The local authority and a nearby secondary school have been instrumental in

developing the school's digital remote education offer. There have been many improvements in the early years, to which the local authority has made a significant contribution.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, staff, parents, pupils, 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.

Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including curriculum plans. Inspectors also reviewed the school's digital platform to observe the learning that was taking place.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheila Iwaskow
Her Majesty's Inspector