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23 February 2021

Miss Laura Newark  
Headteacher  
Sir Robert Hitcham CEVAP Primary School  
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Dear Miss Newark

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Sir Robert Hitcham CEVAP Primary School**

Following my remote inspection with Steve Mellors, 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 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:

- develop leaders through high-quality training that supports them to carry out their roles effectively so they are confidently contributing towards school improvement
- provide focused training and support to staff so they have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the curriculum they are planning and delivering in all subjects
- ensure that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well considered and planned for, and that teaching is suitably adapted.

### **Context**

- In autumn 2019, an interim headteacher led the school until January 2020, when you joined as headteacher. A senior teacher and a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) have been appointed from within the school. A newly qualified teacher joined the staff team in September 2020.
- Following a period of time with an interim executive board (IEB) in place, a new governing body took over in spring 2020. One governor left in September, and another joined in November.
- During the autumn term 2020, no class 'bubbles' were sent home. A small number of individual pupils were taught remotely when they had to self-isolate.
- At the time of this inspection, 80% of all pupils were being educated at home. Approximately a third of all the identified vulnerable pupils and those pupils with SEND attend the school site for their learning.
- At the time of this inspection, leaders were not having to manage any staff absence. No staff are currently absent due to COVID-19.

### **Main findings**

- You have made it a priority to ensure that every pupil receives an education during the current national lockdown. Working with leaders, including governors, you have made sure that you are continually reviewing both the on-site and remote education on offer to all pupils.
- When you joined the school, you reviewed the curriculum in all subject areas. You have worked with leaders to produce detailed plans for all subjects. A new curriculum is being put in place which carefully considers the order in which the knowledge and skills for each subject need to be taught in each year group.

- School partial closures, owing to COVID-19, have hindered the pace of implementing the curriculum as you would like. You know what needs to be done to put the curriculum plans in place and develop them throughout the school. However, teachers have not received training to support them in delivering the new curriculum. Most leaders are relatively new in post and have not had sufficient time or opportunity to fully carry out their leadership roles.
- While there are a range of subjects being taught during this current time, teachers are focusing on reading, writing and mathematics to ensure that pupils have the core knowledge and skills in these curriculum areas. You and your staff are liaising routinely with parents so they are supported to help their children learn at home.
- Leaders have opted to amend the curriculum of some subjects, such as music, and design and technology, during this national lockdown period. Leaders' intention is to help pupils catch up with what they miss once all pupils are back on the school site.
- The new reading curriculum is in the early stages of being taught throughout the school. This has been adapted so it can be delivered to pupils working at home. Early years children and pupils in Year 1 continue to have daily phonics teaching. Teachers encourage pupils to read regularly and they set tasks to develop and demonstrate pupils' understanding of the books they read. Pupils who struggle with reading are identified and they receive appropriate individualised support to help them to catch up.
- You are working effectively to identify and support your most vulnerable pupils, especially to support their personal, social and emotional needs during this period. Consequently, these pupils are able to successfully take part in remote and/or on-site learning which means they are less at risk of falling behind in the current circumstances.
- There has been instability in the oversight of the SEND provision. Recently, you have appointed a SENCo who is starting to check what is in place for pupils with SEND. During the current national lockdown, staff communicate with parents. This helps teachers to find out what pupils need and results in staff being able to offer better support to pupils with SEND. However, there remains work to be done to ensure that curriculum planning and teaching meet the needs of pupils with SEND.
- The IEB previously in place modelled to the new governing body how to be effective in their role. The governing body are curious to find out what leaders are doing and the impact of leaders' actions. Governors recognise they have a lot to learn, but already have an insightful understanding about the importance of balancing support and challenge so leaders are held to account.

- During summer 2020, you had support from an external consultant. This has successfully enabled you to help subject leaders plan a curriculum unique to your school. Governors are accessing advice and training from the local authority training offer. The local authority school effectiveness officer is providing guidance to help develop governors and subject leaders. The support for the latter is in its infancy and, additionally, has been delayed due to COVID-19.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, staff, representatives 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 scrutinised curriculum progression documents, examples of pupils' work, the school's website, recordings of live lessons, online teaching resources and remote education. We took account of the staff responses to the Ofsted staff survey and responses from parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Additionally, we heard pupils read to school staff and spoke with two groups of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Fielding  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**