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Suzanne Cooper
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Cooper

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Brunel Primary and Nursery School

Following my remote inspection with Matt Middlemore, 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 special measures.

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 was judged to require special measures at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in November 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

- In the autumn term 2020, approximately 17% of pupils in different year groups experienced periods of being educated remotely due to COVID-19.
- At the time of this inspection, 39% of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending school. Nearly all vulnerable pupils and children of key workers attend regularly. Around 59% of all pupils are currently being educated remotely.
- No members of staff are currently absent due to COVID-19. Leaders have not experienced significant staffing challenges during the pandemic.

Main findings

- You and your leadership team have continued to develop the curriculum since the last inspection. As a result, much of the curriculum is now fully in place to better meet the needs of all pupils. You have ensured that all pupils have access to technology so that they can continue to receive an appropriate education, both at home and in school.
- The majority of vulnerable pupils and children of key workers are attending school. You and your staff make appropriate adjustments to the curriculum to enthuse and challenge pupils whether they are studying remotely or in school. For example, you have introduced face-to-face and remote small-group sessions and one-to-one tuition to address gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. This is working well to keep pupils engaged.
- Most pupils with SEND currently study remotely. You have ensured that pupils continue with their education as if they were at school. Through personalised timetables, resources and bespoke tasks, you and your staff enable pupils to develop their knowledge and skills in a range of subjects. You maintain strong relationships with the families of pupils with SEND and monitor both their engagement and progress closely. You are working with families to encourage all those pupils who are able to attend school to do so in the current circumstances.
- You continue to prioritise the teaching of reading and phonics. The phonics programme is clearly structured, enabling pupils in key stage 1 and children in early years to understand the link between letters and the sounds they make. Staff provide a range of resources and support so that pupils can access their reading lessons both remotely and in school. Pupils in all year groups, including children in early years, listen to stories daily.
- Pupils discuss and write about texts regularly. You acknowledge that some pupils have limited knowledge of vocabulary and grammar and that this can be a barrier to developing their reading and writing skills. You have focused on improving this area of the curriculum through additional staff training.

However, the current restrictions imposed by the pandemic have slowed the pace of improvement.

- In collaboration with the Bridge Schools Trust, you and your leadership team continue to focus on improving the quality of curriculum subjects. For example, the religious education and music curriculums now show well-sequenced content that enables pupils to build strong foundational knowledge before moving confidently on to more complex topics. However, subjects such as French and geography are not as well planned. Together with the trust, you plan to accelerate revisions to these subjects so that pupils learn more and remember more.
- A carefully sequenced mathematics curriculum is now planned and in place. Staff check pupils' understanding regularly before moving on to more difficult concepts. You make sure that pupils learn the same topics whether remotely or in school. Staff provide helpful additional support to parents. For example, in early years, parents are helped to create and use number lines effectively to develop their child's mathematical understanding.
- Governors have benefited from training with the trust. They have continued their scrutiny of leaders' work. Such action has helped governors to better hold leaders to account for their decisions about the curriculum and the provision of education for all pupils in the current circumstances.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, curriculum leaders, pupils, staff, representatives of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the Bridge Schools Trust to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at curriculum plans, lesson resources and a sample of pupils' work. They also considered the views of staff and parents.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Bridge Schools Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Aykin
Her Majesty's Inspector