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Kieran Scanlon
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Dear Mr Scanlon

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Sir Robert Woodard Academy

Following my remote inspection with Aimee Floyd, 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in January 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

- The school has had stability in staffing over the past two years. The governing body has also experienced settled membership since the last Section 8 monitoring inspection in July 2019.
- During the autumn term 2020, approximately a quarter of the school population accessed their education remotely for periods of time. Years 10 and 11 were most affected due to repeated intervals of self-isolation.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately a tenth of pupils were being educated on site. A quarter of vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were receiving their learning on site.
- At the time of this inspection, leaders reported that two non-teaching staff were absent due to COVID-19. Therefore, the impact on staffing levels was at this point relatively light.

Main findings

- Senior leaders have been quick to put in place a broad educational offer for all pupils this term. This applies to both pupils at home and in school. Since the start of the pandemic, teachers have delivered the curriculum using an online learning platform. All pupils, whether learning remotely or on site, access the same online learning. You made the decision at an early stage to offer live teaching. This has provided pupils with regular contact with their teachers. It has also offered as close to normal learning as possible. Leaders have taken action to ensure that all pupils have internet access and that they have an appropriate device to use. You have also prioritised training for both pupils and staff. This has reduced any barriers to them using the technology.
- Teachers offer the usual curriculum so that pupils do not miss out on vital learning. Leaders took this decision at the outset of the pandemic. As a result of curriculum changes brought in last September, pupils are now also studying a broader selection of subjects than a year ago. You and your senior leaders have been reflective about the best ways to help pupils learn. As a result, you have now moved to a combination of live lessons and remote learning activities to reduce screen time for pupils. You have been tracking how many pupils are engaging with the remote learning. The majority are accessing the learning regularly. However, you are aware of a small number of pupils who are less engaged. You are using a range of strategies to help these pupils become more involved.
- You have considered carefully the provision in place for vulnerable pupils and children of key workers. Teachers supervise approximately a quarter of these pupils in school, ensuring they access the same online learning that is

provided for all pupils. These lessons are supplemented with additional activities such as physical education to promote fitness and well-being. Teachers and pastoral staff keep in frequent contact with those vulnerable pupils working from home to ensure that all is well.

- Years 11 and 13 are also a priority for leaders. Teachers focus on sustaining these pupils' learning momentum. This is despite the uncertainty of how their qualifications will be assessed. Teachers ensure that pupils are being kept informed of any developments.
- Leaders are very aware of the need to promote reading in the school. They know that helping the weakest readers to improve is crucial. Last year, leaders drew up plans to address this aspect. Because of the impact of COVID-19, they have not been able to put them in place.
- A key priority is to further improve provision for pupils with SEND. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has worked with teachers to develop the support they offer. This has led to some improvements in the pupils' learning. The support the SENCo offers has now extended into remote learning. Teachers focus on adapting materials for pupils with SEND and check closely on what progress they are making.
- Governors are holding you to account for the improvements that you are carrying out in the school. They have overseen the changes to the curriculum that you have put in place this year. They have supported the extended key stage 3. They have also welcomed the significant rise of pupils taking up EBacc subjects in key stage 4. Governors keep the review of the range and quality of remote learning at the heart of their discussions with leaders.
- The trust's chief executive officer has ensured that staff have access to high-quality professional development. This training focuses on curriculum improvement. Staff have appreciated this and have refined aspects of curriculum as a result. This remains work in progress. The trust's director of school improvement works closely with leaders to audit current provision and suggest strategies for further development.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the chief executive officer and the director of school improvement from the multi-academy trust, pupils, staff and representatives of those responsible for governance to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

Inspectors also reviewed teaching materials, pupils' work, school improvement documentation and minutes of governors' meetings.

I am copying this letter to the executive board, chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Woodard Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Yasmin Maskatiya
Her Majesty's Inspector