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Mary Haney
Headteacher
Lynsted and Norton Primary School
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Dear Mrs Haney

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Lynsted and Norton Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Laurie Anderson, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 25 and 26 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 September 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.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- assure themselves of the quality of provision for all pupils
- implement plans to improve the curriculum with a greater sense of urgency.

Context

- Since the monitoring inspection in October 2019, a senior teacher has been appointed. One member of the local governing council left and a new governor joined. The Village Academy Trust (VAT) has agreed to merge with Potential in Everyone Academy Trust (PIEAT) in early summer.
- During autumn term 2020, the school closed for a week and all pupils and staff had to self-isolate. Before that, about a fifth of pupils from all year groups had to self-isolate for short periods.
- At the time of this inspection, the school was only open to vulnerable pupils and children of key workers. About 40% of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are currently attending. Approximately three quarters of all pupils are learning remotely.
- At the time of this inspection, one member of staff was absent due to COVID-19.

Main findings

- Leaders have worked hard to make sure that all pupils have access to education while the school is partially closed. Initially, the school provided a mixture of online work and paper resource packs for pupils working at home. Staff dropped off resources such as magnets for science and paint and brushes for art. At the time of the inspection, you had just secured additional equipment and digital access so that all pupils can access and submit their work online. This means that all pupils can now access the same learning activities and more readily get feedback and support from their teachers.
- The work on adapting the curriculum to meet current circumstances is coming together. It has been easier to take English and mathematics online because you had redesigned them before the start of the pandemic. Leaders continued to improve other subjects over the summer term, for example the history, geography and design and technology plans now show the key knowledge and skills you intend pupils to learn from Reception Year to Year 6. However, the roll-out of changes across the whole curriculum has slowed due to the current challenges.
- Pupils in school complete the same online lessons as their peers. Teaching assistants monitor how they are doing. Teachers check on pupils who are learning remotely. Those pupils who submit work digitally get praise and

encouragement from their teachers. They also get support if they get stuck. Leaders recognise the need to focus more on the quality of pupils' responses. Pupils who have worked from the printed packs have not routinely returned work. Consequently, staff do not currently know how well these pupils are learning.

- Leaders see reading as fundamental to pupils' success. They want pupils to access their learning online so that they can continue their phonics lessons, for example by watching videos and hearing the sounds. Leaders have recently arranged for all pupils to have access to books online that are matched to their reading ability so that they can practise what they are learning. Pupils who are in school read to a member of staff twice a week, although you hope to increase this. As yet, pupils who are working from home do not read to a member of staff, although you plan to provide this.
- Staff have encouraged pupils with SEND to attend school and have seen some success. Staff make daily phone calls to parents of pupils with education, health and care plans who are working at home. All pupils with SEND have activities that help them to achieve their personalised targets.
- Governance is in a state of flux because the trust will soon merge with another trust. Communication between the two layers of governance is not strong enough, especially regarding the provision of education and the curriculum. Local governors discuss the actions you have taken in the current circumstances with you, including decisions about the curriculum and remote education. They then report this to trustees. Trustees have focused on finance and the merger. They have not sufficiently assured themselves that the quality of provision is as they intend.
- The interim chief executive officer (CEO) provides you with effective and extensive support. He has also shared learning about dealing with the impact of COVID-19 across trust schools. The school improvement partner (SIP) from PIEAT has provided useful external support. This has helped teachers to consider their teaching approaches in the current context.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the VAT multi-academy trust interim CEO and trustees, including the chair of trustees, the chair of the local governing council, the SIP from PIEAT and members of staff to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

Inspectors also spoke with a group of pupils and listened to pupils read to a member of staff.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the interim CEO of VAT multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lucy English
Her Majesty's Inspector