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Pauline Turner
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Dear Mrs Turner

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Thrapston Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Steve Varnam, 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 January 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:

- refine existing curriculum plans so that knowledge is clearly identified and sequenced in all subjects and in all year groups
- ensure that all teachers have equally high expectations of what pupils can manage, whether they are working at home or in school.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, a number of staff have left the school. A new assistant headteacher has been appointed. There is a new chair of the governing body. Most governors are new to their roles.
- Currently, the large majority of pupils are learning remotely. Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who are vulnerable, continue to be educated in school.

Main findings

- Senior leaders have taken the necessary actions to ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, receive education at this time. They have worked hard to provide resources, including electronic devices, so that pupils can access the same curriculum as those in school. One parent's comment that summed up the views of many was that, 'Staff have gone above and beyond to help our children.'
- Prior to schools partially closing in March 2020, leaders were developing the curriculum. These plans are further ahead in some subjects than others. Subject leaders have set out the skills that they want pupils to gain, and when. These plans are not fully developed. It is not clear in all subjects what knowledge pupils need to be able to demonstrate these skills.
- You have made sure that teachers continue to provide phonics lessons every day for those pupils in school and at home. Teachers provide effective support when pupils fall behind in reading. Leaders have made sure that pupils have access to books that match their phonics knowledge. Pupils are becoming increasingly accurate and fluent readers.
- Leaders and teachers have worked hard to adapt the curriculum for remote education. For example, in music, leaders have changed the order of some content. Pupils are spending more time listening to and appreciating different types of music. In science, teachers deliver lessons about materials using everyday household items. Some pupils choose to access work in school and at home that is too easy. Teachers' expectations of what work pupils can manage are sometimes too low.

- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) ensures that pupils with SEND continue to receive education and support at this time. Pupils with SEND who attend school continue to access support as they did before. Pupils with SEND who are learning remotely have regular one-to-one meetings with staff. They continue to access specialist services and resources.
- Governors provide effective challenge and support to leaders. They are a knowledgeable and skilled team. They have used this knowledge to check what leaders have done to provide an education in the current circumstances.
- The local authority provides some support to the school. It has started to deliver training to governors and curriculum leaders. The pandemic has interrupted this work. Leaders and governors are keen for this collaborative work to have more impact.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the SENCo and other senior leaders. We met with two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We reviewed a selection of recorded lessons and pupils' work, and we observed, remotely, some pupils reading to a member of staff.

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

Yours sincerely

Damien Turrell
Her Majesty's Inspector