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Leanne Mahony
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Dear Mrs Mahony

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Nechells Primary E-ACT Academy

Following my remote inspection with Nicola Harwood, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 10 and 11 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 have serious weaknesses.

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 have serious weaknesses at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in October 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

- Since the previous inspection, staffing and governance have remained stable.
- During the autumn term 2020, approximately two thirds of pupils experienced at least one period of remote education because of COVID-19. This included all pupils in the Reception Year, Year 2 and Year 4.
- At the time of this inspection, the school was only open to vulnerable pupils and the children of critical workers. Approximately one quarter of pupils were being educated on site. Three quarters of pupils were learning remotely. Approximately half of vulnerable pupils and half of pupils with education, health and care plans were attending school.

Main findings

- You and the trust have a 'can-do' attitude to providing education in the current circumstances. Over the past year, you have refined your approach to remote learning. As a result, you were well placed to move to online teaching for all pupils in January 2021. The trust has ensured that every pupil working remotely has an individual device. Helpful videos guide pupils and parents in how to use the online learning platform.
- Teachers check pupils' attendance in lessons three times a day. If pupils do not attend, staff follow this up swiftly. As a result, almost all pupils are accessing education. Pupils confidently log in to lessons and upload their work each day.
- Work to improve the curriculum has continued throughout the pandemic. Starting in the early years, you have set out the knowledge that pupils will learn in each subject and topic. Curriculum plans break this knowledge down lesson by lesson. In some subjects, knowledge is split into suitably small chunks. In others, this needs further work.
- In most subjects, teachers are covering the same content as they would in normal times. This means there is little disruption to what pupils are learning. In English and mathematics, leaders are adjusting curriculum plans to take account of missed teaching in summer 2020. This is helping to address gaps in pupils' knowledge. In a small number of subjects, online teaching means that pupils are not able to learn some of the things they would typically, for example in art. Key stage 2 pupils are spending less time handwriting. You know there will be some learning to catch up with when the school re-opens to all pupils.
- In lessons, there is a suitable balance between teaching new things and revisiting earlier learning. Teachers give instant feedback to pupils about how they are doing. They check pupils' work. Pupils ask questions when they do not understand. As a result, pupils' knowledge is continuing to build. They are

enjoying learning. As one pupil explained, 'When I love my learning that is when I remember the most, and I love learning at my school'.

- Teachers are adapting lessons to suit online teaching. Pupils experience an appropriate mix of direct instruction, class work and independent work. In the early years, teachers plan lessons in short bursts to take account of children's concentration span. Teachers have sent equipment home for pupils to use. They are finding creative ways to ensure that pupils do not miss out on practical learning. For example, planning science experiments using resources that pupils have at home.
- Checks have shown that more Year 1 pupils than usual do not have the phonics knowledge you expect at this time of year. These pupils are receiving extra help to catch up. This includes pupils who are working remotely. The weakest readers in school read to an adult each day. Their reading books are increasingly matched to the sounds they know. However, some of these pupils still lack fluency. The weakest readers in school and at home need even more practise.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are continuing to benefit from additional support. Some pupils receive teaching ahead of lessons to prepare them for new content. Others receive extra help during or after lessons. A small number of pupils with high-level needs are following a personalised curriculum. This is supporting pupils with SEND to keep pace with what they would typically be learning.
- Trust leaders have taken responsibility for operational matters relating to COVID-19. This has freed up time for you to focus on the education you are providing to pupils. The trust makes regular checks on the education pupils are receiving and the number of pupils taking part. A trust representative leads termly 'governance review' and 'working alongside' days. This input has improved your curriculum knowledge, and that of other leaders. The trust is supporting improvements to provision for pupils with SEND.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, the deputy headteacher, the reading and early years leader, the inclusion leader and three subject leaders to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. We held discussions with the chief executive officer, deputy chief executive officer and regional education director of the multi-academy trust.

We also met with two groups of pupils and a group of staff. We listened to a small number of pupils read to a familiar adult. We examined some of the school's curriculum plans and reviewed some examples of remote education. We considered the 17 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the E-ACT multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Claire Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector