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24 February 2021

Stuart Evans  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Evans

**Additional, remote monitoring inspection of New Leaf Centre**

Following my remote inspection with Eve Morris, 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 April 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 last inspection, there have been changes to the management committee. The chair of the management committee resigned in April 2020. A new member joined the committee at the same time and was appointed as chair. This chair resigned in January 2021. The vice-chair of the management committee has taken on the role of acting chair.
- During the autumn term 2020, approximately one third of pupils experienced at least one period of remote education because of COVID-19.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately two thirds of pupils are being educated at home. Just under half of pupils with the highest need and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are being educated on site.
- At the time of this inspection, no staff were absent due to COVID-19.

## **Main findings**

- Leaders plan the curriculum carefully. They regularly review it to make sure that all pupils receive an appropriate education. The school's remote education programme is highly individualised to meet pupils' needs. Most pupils have had a negative experience of education in other schools in the past. Some pupils have missed long periods of education before joining the school. Teachers therefore use many ways to engage pupils in their learning and to make it interesting. For example, in geography, pupils in key stage 2 have completed virtual tours of the local area.
- Pupils continue to study a wide range of subjects. However, they are not receiving physical education. Teachers are being creative in the way that they are teaching their subjects. For example, in motor mechanics at an alternative provider, pupils can watch the teacher carry out vehicle maintenance via video. These demonstrations help pupils to build on their knowledge of what to do when maintaining a vehicle.
- Leaders and staff actively engage with pupils and their families to get them into school or alternative provision. As a result, attendance in the autumn term showed a significant improvement. However, attendance so far this term is not as good due to high rates of COVID-19.
- Leaders know the pupils and their families well. Robust procedures are in place to check that all pupils are safe and well. These include daily phone calls home, virtual meetings with pupils and home visits. Leaders say that effective working relationships between the school and external agencies help pupils and their families to get the support they need.

- Reading continues to be a school priority. Leaders rightly recognise that reading is vital if pupils are to access learning and be prepared for the next stage in their education or employment and training. There is an expectation that all pupils will read at least once a day, including when they are learning at home. Staff adapt the programme to meet individual pupils' needs and interests. For example, pupils might be expected to read five pages of a book, have a one-to-one reading lesson or read an article in a newspaper. Pupils who find reading difficult have regular phonics lessons. Leaders' plans include all staff having further training in phonics.
- Leaders have made changes to the usual careers programme due to the national restrictions. However, leaders have made sure that pupils still receive appropriate careers advice. For example, pupils attend careers events virtually. This includes Walsall's apprenticeship week and various careers fairs. Pupils' key workers, supported by the careers adviser, continually advise and help pupils with their plans for the future. As a result, the number of pupils not in education, employment or training is decreasing over time.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND. This begins as soon as the pupil is referred to the centre. Staff complete several assessments to identify any unmet needs. Teachers use this information to inform the curriculum and lesson planning. As a result, pupils benefit from an education based on their individual needs. Leaders make sure that teachers give pupils extra resources to help them with their work. For example, teachers give pupils mini whiteboards to use at home. Pupils with high anxiety continue to receive home tuition from specialist teachers.
- The management committee has high aspirations for what the school and its pupils can achieve. Members of the committee check on the school's provision for remote education. They challenge leaders about attendance figures and how well pupils are engaging in their learning. However, their understanding of how teachers assess what pupils are learning is at an early stage.
- Leaders work closely with the local authority. The school improvement partner, attendance officer and specialist teacher for reading give effective support to the school. Leaders value this support.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, pupils, staff, the acting chair of the management committee, a representative of the local authority and leaders from alternative providers, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

Inspectors looked at pupils' work. They also reviewed the 24 responses from the staff survey and the seven responses to Ofsted Parent View, including three free-text responses.

I am copying this letter to the acting chair of the management committee, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Walsall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Yates  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**