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3 March 2021

Alyson Walsh
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Dear Mrs Walsh

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Radcliffe Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Julie Barlow, 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 February 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:

- implement the new curriculum plans for subjects other than English and mathematics, from the early years to Year 6.

Context

- Since the last inspection, a new chair of governors and two new members of the governing body have been appointed by the trust. You took up your post as headteacher in September 2019. An interim executive headteacher was appointed at the same time. The leadership team has been restructured.
- In September 2020, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) left the school. This role is being covered by the deputy headteacher.
- During the autumn term 2020, almost all pupils worked at home for a short period of time.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately one fifth of the pupils are being educated on site. This includes almost all of the pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan and the school's most vulnerable pupils.

Main findings

- Following your appointment, you have focused on revising the existing curriculum. You have prioritised reading, writing and mathematics from the early years to Year 6. Staff have received training to improve their knowledge in these subjects so that they can deliver the curriculum more effectively. Curriculum plans for English and mathematics now identify the content that you want pupils to know, as well as the order in which it will be learned. Improved systems for checking what is being taught mean that you and other leaders have a better understanding of what pupils know and remember in these subjects.
- In contrast, leaders for subjects other than English and mathematics are at an earlier stage of developing the curriculum in their areas of responsibility. The pandemic slowed down this area for improvement. While there are new plans for each curriculum area that identify what pupils will learn, the challenges presented by the COVID-19 restrictions mean that staff have not had the training that they need to deliver these plans successfully.
- Leaders and teachers work closely with parents and carers to identify the most effective way to deliver the curriculum remotely. You have ensured that a wide range of resources and equipment is provided to families to support them with learning at home. As a result, most pupils are now engaging well with the remote education that teachers are providing. You and other leaders check that pupils are taking part in the remote education on offer and take action to encourage pupils to re-engage.

- The curriculum has been adapted well so that pupils who are in school, and those who are working at home, continue to learn key content in a broad range of subjects. Teachers check pupils' work and use this information to shape future activities to meet pupils' needs. This means that pupils are able to build on what they know and can remember.
- Relationships between home and school have strengthened during the COVID-19 restrictions. Through phone calls and visits, you know that pupils, including those that are vulnerable, are safe and well. You offer additional support to families by engaging with local charities and with other agencies.
- Teaching pupils, especially the most vulnerable pupils, to become fluent and confident readers is a priority. The books that pupils read closely match the sounds that they know. Teachers record daily phonics sessions for pupils to access at home. This ensures that pupils continue to develop their phonic knowledge and reading abilities whether they are in school or working at home. These lessons are available for those pupils in key stage 2 who are at the early stages of reading. Follow-up activities provide teachers with a better understanding of the sounds that pupils know and remember.
- In early years and key stage 1, quality texts underpin all learning activities and ensure that pupils have access to books that promote a love of reading. Older pupils access an appropriate range of online books similar to the texts that pupils read in school. This helps pupils to develop their fluency in reading and regain their love of reading for pleasure.
- Relevant risk assessments for pupils with an EHC plan are regularly updated as circumstances change. Leaders work well with other agencies. This ensures that this group of pupils receive the extra help that they need. The SENCo works closely with teachers to ensure that the work that they provide meets pupils' needs, both educationally and emotionally.
- Governors and trustees share your high expectations for pupils. They hold you and other leaders to account for the education on offer during the current circumstances. They are very aware of the additional workload for staff and mindful of providing support for staff's well-being. Governors and trustees have secured additional funding to be able to provide the equipment that vulnerable families need to be able to access the curriculum at home. As a result, an increasing number of pupils are able to access the curriculum remotely.
- A wide range of support has been put in place to improve the quality of the education that the school provides. You have received support and advice from the executive headteacher. Governors receive training to enable them to carry out their roles and responsibilities. Subject leaders work with other leaders across the trust and the local hub for mathematics. This has enabled them to make some improvements to the curriculum.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the interim executive headteacher, senior leaders, pupils, staff, members of the governing body and members of the board of trustees. These meetings were to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during the third national lockdown.

Inspectors reviewed the school's curriculum plans and documents related to governance. Inspectors also listened to pupils read and talked with a group of pupils from key stage 2 about their current experiences in school. Inspectors considered the 43 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 16 responses from the online staff survey.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the Bury College Education Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bury. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Stringer
Her Majesty's Inspector