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John Watson
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Dear Mr Watson

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Oulder Hill Community Language College

Following my remote inspection with Linda Emmett, 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, most of Ofsted's monitoring inspections are being carried out remotely. The first day of this inspection, however, took place on site due to significant concerns about safeguarding at the previous inspection. The second day of the inspection was conducted remotely.

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 February 2020.

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.

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

- Since the last inspection, a new special educational needs coordinator joined the school. The head of geography left the school. A new chair of governors was appointed. The school is due to join a multi-academy trust.
- In the autumn term 2020, almost all pupils were educated at home for a while. Over one half of pupils were educated at home for three weeks or more. Over one fifth of pupils were educated at home for five weeks or more. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 spent the most time learning from home.
- At the time of the inspection, approximately one in twenty pupils were being educated on the school site. This included just over one tenth of pupils with an education, health and care plan and just over one third of vulnerable pupils.

Main findings

- Leaders have convincingly addressed the weaknesses in safeguarding that were identified at the last inspection. They have revitalised the school's approach to keeping pupils safe. They have responded appropriately to the increased risks caused by the pandemic, such as those relating to pupils' emotional well-being. They have also developed effective systems to monitor pupils' safety while they are learning at home.
- You have continued to focus on developing the school's curriculum during the pandemic. Subject leaders have increased the scope and ambition of their curriculums. This is particularly the case for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Some subject leaders have started to consider what important knowledge pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn it. Despite this, the quality of curriculum planning varies significantly across subjects. Some departments remain focused on developing how pupils are taught, rather than on the content of pupils' learning. During the autumn term, leaders' work to develop the curriculum was disrupted by the frequent need to provide remote education to different groups of pupils.
- You, other leaders and governors have taken the necessary steps to ensure that pupils continue to learn during this challenging period. All pupils continue to study the full range of subjects. In most subjects, pupils continue to study their usual curriculum. However, this is not the case in some practical subjects, such as physical education and design and technology. Some subject leaders have decided to slightly change the order of the curriculum. This is because they think that certain topics are best taught in the classroom. For example, the history department has delayed the teaching of the Holocaust.
- Pupils are taught three 'live' lessons each day. Teachers' delivery of the curriculum has many common features with normal classroom practice. This

helps pupils to maintain familiar routines. Staff have embraced the challenge of teaching remotely. They share ideas, for example, on how they can best develop the range of ways that they assess pupils' learning. This has improved pupils' experience of remote learning.

- Most pupils educated at the school access the same curriculum content as those learning from home. A small group of pupils who speak English as an additional language are receiving intensive support. This is to develop their knowledge of English so that they can access the curriculum in the future. Teachers continue to deliver the usual curriculum to pupils in Year 11. Leaders plan to assess these pupils in a number of ways before they leave the school. This will help teachers determine what grades they will submit to examination boards.
- All staff have received useful training on how to meet the needs of pupils with SEND when they work remotely. Teachers use a range of effective strategies to adapt their teaching for these pupils. For example, teachers and teaching assistants provide opportunities for pupils with SEND to access additional support away from live lessons. This is helping to ensure that these pupils continue to learn well. The same is true for those vulnerable pupils who need extra help whether they learn from home or at school. Staff keep in close contact with vulnerable pupils to check on their learning and welfare.
- Leaders launched a new strategy to improve pupils' reading at the start of the school year. As part of this strategy, weaker readers, including those who are vulnerable, access different online resources to develop their reading fluency. Some pupils receive help through a resource that identifies and addresses gaps in phonics knowledge. Pupils have continued to use these programmes as part of their remote learning curriculum. These strategies are beginning to help pupils improve their reading skills.
- Governors have capably overseen the improvements made to safeguarding. They have supported you and other leaders to make necessary changes. They have also held leaders to account for the impact of their work in this area. Governors have closely monitored the school's approach to remote education to good effect. However, their oversight of leaders' work to develop the curriculum has been less thorough.
- Several partners, including the local authority, have supported the school to refine the improvements made to safeguarding. As yet, leaders have not received significant support to develop the quality of the curriculum.

Evidence

The first day of this inspection was conducted on site. The second day was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, governors,

and representatives of the local authority to discuss safeguarding and leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding and the curriculum. We considered evidence relating to how the school is providing remote education, including examples of pupils' work. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 49 free-text responses, and 72 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Will Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector