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5 March 2021

Graeme Napier
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Dear Mr Napier

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Bexleyheath Academy

Following my remote inspection with Lucy Bruce, 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 November 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, a new vice principal and a lead practitioner for mathematics have been appointed. An additional governor has been appointed to the governing body.
- The proportion of pupils who had to be educated remotely was low for most of the autumn term 2020. In December, the number of pupils being educated remotely increased, particularly in Year 11 and in the sixth form. These year groups were educated remotely for the last week of term. In total, about 40% of pupils were educated at home during this time.
- At the time of the inspection, almost all pupils were being educated at home. A very small number of vulnerable pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending on site.
- The school is fully staffed and there are no significant staffing issues. At the time of the inspection, no staff were absent due to COVID-19.

Main findings

- Leaders have high expectations for pupils and a clear vision for learning at the school. The pandemic has not held back leaders' ambition. With the support of the trust, they have ensured that pupils have whatever they need to continue learning the curriculum at home. For example, leaders provide pupils with equipment and broadband.
- Leaders have continued to focus on improving the curriculum since the first national lockdown. Leaders have involved staff and pupils effectively in developing their shared values. Subject leaders make these explicit in curriculum plans. Senior leaders had addressed the narrowing of the curriculum by the start of the pandemic. They have restored the teaching of physical education and religious education in Years 10 and 11. Leaders have continued to improve the curriculum in other subjects, despite the pandemic.
- Leaders organise remote education in the same way as on site. Pupils follow their usual timetable and are taught by their class teacher. Routines, such as greeting pupils at the doorway of the virtual classroom and learning activities like the 'do now' tasks, have been transferred seamlessly. Pupils on site follow the same remote education as pupils at home, with appropriate supervision and support from staff.
- Subject leaders work with their teams to review the sequence of work and make changes to help pupils study at home. Staff ensure that pupils can work online in many different ways so that they learn more and remember more. Staff check that pupils understand the work.

- Leaders check pupils' attendance and engagement in the online classes. If pupils, including vulnerable pupils, struggle, leaders take action. They talk to parents and carers, do home visits and invite pupils to work in school if it would help them. Parents get information about their children's attendance and participation every day. Parents who responded to the online survey were unanimous in their praise of the school's approach to remote education. One parent, typical of many, wrote: 'From communication to my child's learning, they have somehow managed to make it feel like he hasn't lost any time in this pandemic.'
- Year 11 pupils can attend revision sessions and leaders provided a transition programme over the summer to help pupils prepare for A-level study. For Year 13 students, the university application process has continued smoothly. Leaders have maintained support for weaker readers and continued opportunities for pupils to explore a range of texts and use electronic books. All pupils, at home and at school, can choose to participate in events such as assemblies and clubs, including a reading club. Pupils spoke highly of the school and the remote education provision.
- Leaders have improved the provision for pupils with SEND. They are determined to remove barriers which might prevent pupils making progress through the curriculum. Staff have information about pupils' needs and know how to design and adapt resources for pupils learning remotely at home, as well as for those pupils at school. Staff are skilled, and use the opportunities offered by the online platform to support pupils to learn the curriculum. They spot and address pupils' misconceptions quickly. Leaders provide opportunities for staff to share their practice with each other.
- Governors have continued to meet and provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders throughout the pandemic. Governors also monitor the quality of the remote education provision.
- The trust has been effective in enabling leaders to remove barriers to all pupils receiving an education in the current circumstances. This is the case for all pupils, including vulnerable pupils and those with SEND. The trust has provided devices and Wi-Fi access, as well as set high expectations for the quality of remote learning. The trust's curriculum teams continue to work remotely with subject leaders to support them to develop and improve the curriculum.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke with you and your senior team, the chair of the governing body, the executive principal and the trust's national director of secondary schools to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We spoke with staff to discuss the remote education provision. These discussions included subject leaders, teaching staff and leaders responsible for special educational needs. We spoke with pupils being educated on site and looked at a range of remote education activities.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Academies Enterprise Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bexley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Hallett
Her Majesty's Inspector