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Jude Norman
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Ms Norman

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Hindley High School

Following my remote inspection with Emma Gregory, 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 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 March 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.

Context

- You were appointed as acting headteacher in October 2020. Two acting deputy headteachers were appointed in January 2021. A lead practitioner and a teacher joined the school in September 2020. An interim executive board (IEB) was formed in October 2020.
- In the autumn term, about three quarters of all pupils have worked from home on at least one occasion. This has affected pupils in Year 9 more than other year groups.
- At the time of this inspection, the school was only open to vulnerable pupils and children of key workers. Approximately one in 20 pupils are attending school. Almost one fifth of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and just under a half of vulnerable pupils are attending school. All other pupils are being educated remotely.
- At the time of this inspection, leaders were not having to manage significant staff absence. A very small proportion of staff are currently absent due to COVID-19.

Main findings

- Since September 2020, you and the school's leadership team have acted with urgency to address the issues identified at the previous inspection. You have done your best to overcome the challenges presented by the pandemic. For example, you have taken steps to strengthen leadership across the school and to establish new expectations for staff and pupils. Leaders' work to further develop the school's curriculum has continued. You have ensured that teachers have received effective training so that they are able to deliver the improved curriculum offer. You have fostered positive relationships in the school community. Staff are a cohesive team. They are excited about leaders' plans to improve the school.
- In September 2020, you, with the support of subject leaders, changed how the curriculum is delivered. This helps teachers to deliver the curriculum effectively to those pupils who are learning in school and at home. You have continued with this approach since January 2021. Pupils' learning includes a combination of 'live' teaching and time for pupils to work on their own. This provides sufficient time for curriculum content to be delivered and for teachers to help pupils with their work.
- Vulnerable pupils who work in school continue to receive the support that they need to help them make gains in their learning. This is being replicated for those vulnerable pupils who are working at home because you have ensured that staff are well equipped to spot signs of pupils losing interest in

their learning. In addition, staff keep a close check on the well-being of vulnerable pupils and they are confident to report any concerns.

- You are mindful of the challenges that pupils in Year 11 face. To this end, teachers have identified learning that this group of pupils have missed or forgotten. Teachers then use this information to revisit important content in order to build pupils' knowledge and confidence. Pupils in Year 11 benefit from the additional support that you have put in place. For example, they receive extra help in English and mathematics. Year 11 pupils continue to profit from appropriate advice to prepare them for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- You do not underestimate the impact of the partial school closures on pupils' reading skills. During the autumn term, you were quick to identify those pupils who are still in the early stages of learning to read. Those pupils who need the most help benefit from additional phonics lessons, both in school and when working remotely. You also provide help for those pupils who have fallen behind with their reading. You have ensured that all pupils, regardless of their reading ability, can enjoy an extensive range of books and audio books online.
- You and other leaders are setting increasingly high expectations for pupils with SEND. Through new approaches to curriculum planning and delivery, teachers consider how to support this group of pupils more effectively. Pupils with SEND continue to receive the support they are used to from teaching assistants when they are learning from home. Staff maintain regular contact with this group of pupils to ensure that they, and their families, receive the support that they need.
- Members of the IEB bring a range of relevant skills and expertise to the school. They provide a healthy balance of challenge and support to you and other senior leaders. Through their meetings and discussions with leaders, they have established a comprehensive understanding of the actions that you are taking in response to the previous inspection. The IEB are increasingly well informed about the decisions that leaders have made during the pandemic.
- External support from a local secondary school is helping teachers to improve the delivery and assessment of the mathematics curriculum. The local authority provides you and other senior leaders with useful guidance. This support is helping you to continue to strengthen the leadership of the school.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the acting headteacher and two other senior leaders. We met with subject leaders, lead practitioners and groups of teachers and pupils.

One of us held meetings with those responsible for governance and with a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We examined the school's curriculum plans and records of the meetings of the IEB. We considered 49 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. We also considered the views expressed by parents in the 61 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the comments received by Ofsted's free-text facility.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Pennington
Her Majesty's Inspector