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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Miss Helen Emmett
Headteacher
Heron Park Academy
Dallington Road
Hampden Park
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN22 9EE

Dear Miss Emmett

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Heron Park Primary Academy

Following my remote inspection with James Broadbridge, 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 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in September 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

- There have been various staffing changes since the last monitoring inspection in January 2020. Two members of the leadership team have left and a new deputy headteacher has joined. A member of the local academy board (LAB) has left.
- During the autumn term 2020, a small proportion of pupils had to work from home for short periods. Some, particularly pupils in Year 2, had more than one period of self-isolation.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately a third of pupils were being educated on site. This includes about two thirds of vulnerable pupils and a similar proportion of those with education, health and care plans. In total, a third of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are learning at school.
- A small proportion of staff were absent due to COVID-19 at the time of this inspection. Those who are well are working from home. Colleagues are covering all in-school duties.

Main findings

- Leaders have ensured that pupils continue with their education during the current circumstances. Staff work closely with families to help their children to engage with learning when working from home. Parents who responded to Ofsted's Parent View are overwhelmingly positive. One commented that staff efforts with remote learning mean that their children 'feel included and happy' even though they 'would rather be at school'.
- During the partial closure of schools from March 2020, leaders accelerated their redesign of the curriculum. They ensured that all staff had greater clarity about the purpose and content of each subject. This work made it easier for teachers to then adapt lessons for pupils learning remotely. Pupils are continuing with all their usual subjects. Staff have changed some lessons to fit the home environment. For example, the weekly physical education challenge utilises common items pupils have at home.
- Teachers provide a mix of online and paper-based lessons for pupils working at home. Leaders want to limit pupils' screen time and to allow digital devices to be shared in families. Each year group has a 'live meeting' during the day so that pupils can have some social time with fun challenges. Teachers also use this time to review the previous day's learning and to explain what pupils have to do next. Pupils attending school are taught the same work. They also have useful extra lessons with their teachers and learning support assistants to make sure that they can remember what they have learned or to make up missed learning. All pupils join in with online celebration meetings on Fridays. Leaders intend that this will help to maintain a sense of school community,

especially for pupils working from home, and support pupils' social and emotional well-being.

- Work to develop reading continues. Pupils in school who are learning to read have daily phonics lessons and read to a member of staff every day. Those working from home are sent videos of phonics lessons. Staff have heard some of these pupils read. However, teachers do not know how well other pupils at home are learning to read. Children in Reception Year have digital books that match their reading stage. Leaders have recently purchased access to digital books for older pupils learning at home. Leaders recognise the need to ensure that all staff know how well these pupils are reading so that they can allocate the right books for each pupil.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has been increasingly successful in encouraging pupils with SEND to attend school on site. Staff have continued to provide intervention classes for these pupils. For those working from home, the SEND team has kept in close contact with pupils and their parents. This support tends to be more about social and emotional well-being. Teachers have made some adaptations to lessons and resources for pupils to use at home and some pupils attend extra online groups. It is not yet clear how successful these adaptations and extra sessions are.
- Trustees and members of the LAB have strengthened their challenge to leaders. Trustees have focused on the quality of provision for pupils. LAB members share these high expectations. Communication between the two levels of governance has improved since September. This has helped to improve the consistency of challenge to leaders.
- Support from the trust's chief executive officer (CEO) and director of education has ensured that leaders continue to focus on overall school improvement as well as address the current circumstances. Their work with subject leaders, in particular, has helped these staff to refine their plans. The trust has engaged a wide range of external support that has also been effective. In particular, the LAB has benefited from the work to improve governance.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, staff, pupils and the director of education, the CEO, members of the LAB and trustees of the Aurora Academies Trust multi-academy trust to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also listened to pupils read, looked at their work and reviewed resources developed for remote learning. We looked at the 19 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 13 free-text responses, and 22 staff questionnaire returns.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the CEO of the Aurora Academies Trust multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lucy English
Her Majesty's Inspector