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Leila Naldrett
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Dear Mrs Naldrett

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Gatehouse Primary Academy

Following my remote inspection with Kathy Maddocks, 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, 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 November 2017.

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

- The deputy headteacher and a unit leader for Years 3 and 4 are absent from school. The unit leader for Years 5 and 6 has moved to another school within First Federation multi-academy trust. Leaders and governors have ensured that these roles are being covered. There is one new governor.
- Across the autumn term, approximately 21% of pupils in different year groups experienced a period of remote education due to COVID-19.
- At the time of this inspection, 34% of pupils were attending school. Approximately, 62% of vulnerable pupils and 80% of pupils with education, health and care plans were also learning in school.

Main findings

- Before schools partially closed on 23 March 2020, you checked with parents and staff about suitable ways to teach pupils remotely, including Reception children. You decided on a multi-media approach. Trustees describe this response as 'getting ahead of the curve'. As a result of careful planning and the allocation of specialist equipment, you have ensured that all pupils can access education either remotely or in school.
- You and trustees are adamant that, wherever pupils access their education, they should receive the school's usual curriculum. Teachers have changed the order of teaching in some subjects, such as physical education and design and technology, as it is hard to learn some parts of the curriculum remotely.
- The leadership of English and mathematics is more advanced than in other subjects. As a result, the curriculum in English and mathematics is organised so that pupils learn the most important knowledge and skills in the right order. Leaders, including trustees, recognise that leadership in other subjects is in the early stages of development. You, with support from the trust, are in the process of developing subject leaders' understanding of their roles and responsibilities. However, the impact of COVID-19 has hindered your plans.
- The majority of vulnerable and key worker children are attending school. There is an experienced team of staff who ensure that pupils receive daily activities in literacy, mathematics and at least one other subject. Teachers check pupils' work and provide regular feedback. This helps pupils know how to improve. As a result of parental feedback, leaders have put in place systems that enable pupils who are learning remotely to clarify any misconceptions they may have.
- In recent years, reading has been a priority for the school. You have made sure that the books for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 match the

letters and sounds that they know. You are providing parents and carers with appropriate books to support pupils with their early reading. Pupils who have fallen behind are having additional remote or in-school sessions to help them catch up. However, some pupils are not able to recognise sounds that they have already learned. This hampers their ability to read fluently.

- In recent years, leaders have overhauled the mathematics curriculum. This includes the school's approach to assessment. Nevertheless, further training is necessary to ensure that children in the early years achieve well in this subject.
- The vast majority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are attending school. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has ensured that, whether a pupil is working remotely or in school, they are having their needs met. The work of the SENCo is much appreciated by parents.
- Governors check the actions that leaders take to assure themselves that pupils receive an appropriate education in the current circumstances. Regular monitoring has enabled governors and trustees to have a strong understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They recognise that the curriculum needs further development.
- The chief executive officer and the trust school improvement leader work closely with you. The trust has provided both challenge and support in equal measure. They make key decisions, and this enables you to get on with the day-to-day running of the school.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, pupils, the chief executive officer of the trust, staff, the vice-chair and chair of the trust to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We considered information about the school's remote education offer on the school website. We looked at subject plans and heard some pupils read. We also looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 31 free-text responses, and 19 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the First Federation multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matt Middlemore
Her Majesty's Inspector