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Ken Vernon
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Dear Mr Vernon

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of The City of Leicester College

Following my remote inspection with Chris Davies, 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 at its previous section 5 inspections. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in November 2019.

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 headteacher joined the school in March 2020, at the time of the first national lockdown due to COVID-19. A business manager has joined the school, and curriculum leaders in modern foreign languages (MFL) and performing arts have been appointed. Two new governors have joined the governing body.
- Across the autumn term 2020, half of all pupils had at least one period of self-isolation due to COVID-19 and were educated remotely. The most heavily affected year groups were Years 10 and 12.
- At the time of this inspection, most pupils are receiving their education remotely. A very small number of pupils, including vulnerable pupils, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) with education health and care plans are being educated on the school site.

Main findings

- Leaders' determined actions have ensured that all pupils can access education in the current circumstances. Parents and carers have expressed their gratitude for these efforts.
- Curriculum improvements have accelerated in recent months. Leaders are keen to make sure that the curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. Curriculum leaders have applied the school's six 'curriculum principles' well. They have identified the key knowledge that pupils need to know and the order in which they should learn this. They are keen to ensure that pupils' learning 'lasts a lifetime'.
- The curriculum celebrates the diversity of the school community. For example, in geography pupils study countries such as Iraq, India and Jamaica. Many pupils are vegan, and the moral aspects of veganism are debated in science lessons.
- Teachers have received training to improve their knowledge of the curriculum and how best to teach it. They have learned how to plan and deliver live online lessons. This training has been effective. Some teachers who had never delivered live lessons before are now doing so confidently.
- Leaders have continued to promote the love of reading while pupils are learning at home, for example through the digital library. Pupils have access to a wide variety and genres of books, including the texts they need for their studies. Pupils and their parents value this resource. Staff quickly identify pupils who struggle to read, and then a specialist teacher supports these pupils effectively. Pupils are improving their reading skills.

- Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive the support that they need to improve their language skills so that they can access the curriculum.
- Leaders have provided ongoing support and reassurance to pupils in Years 11 and 13. They have ensured that these pupils are not distracted by the uncertainty regarding examinations and can focus on their learning. Careers advice and guidance are helping these pupils to remain ambitious for their future. Strong support for pupils' mental health and well-being is in place.
- A very small number of vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEND learn on the school site. These pupils study the usual curriculum. Staff provide help and pastoral care. Most pupils with SEND are engaging in remote learning. Teachers make appropriate adjustments to online resources, for example for pupils with hearing impairments, so that they can continue their learning. The special educational needs coordinator checks the curriculum to make sure it is ambitious and meeting pupils' needs.
- Governance has improved since the previous inspection. The chair of the governing body has supported the school's ongoing improvement, for example by ensuring that governors are well trained. Governors' meetings are now closely focused on the actions required to improve the quality of pupils' education.
- The school has received effective support from a local leader of education (LLE). The headteacher has benefited from her expert mentoring. The local authority has provided appropriate oversight. Local authority officers have commissioned support for the school when required.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, senior and curriculum leaders and a group of teaching staff. We met with the chair of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the LLE who is currently working with the school, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also listened to pupils read and reviewed recordings of lessons. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 3 free-text responses, and 111 staff questionnaire responses.

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

Yours sincerely

Jayne Ashman
Her Majesty's Inspector