

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



10 March 2021

Jane Galbraith
Headteacher
Lathom High School: A Technology College
Glenburn Road
Skelmersdale
Lancashire
WN8 6JN

Dear Mrs Galbraith

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Lathom High School: A Technology College

Following my remote inspection with Ahmed Marikar, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 24 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 four successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in December 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.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- ensure that curriculum plans in subjects that require further development are ordered well and outline clearly what pupils should know and remember.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, a new chair and vice-chair of the governing body have taken up their posts. Three governors have also joined the governing body. Subject leaders have been appointed in English, mathematics, geography, design and technology, science and computer science. Three teachers have also joined the school.
- In the autumn term 2020, almost all pupils in the school were educated remotely at some point due to COVID-19 restrictions. Just over one third of pupils have experienced repeated periods of self-isolation. This is particularly the case for pupils in Years 9 to 11.
- At the time of this inspection, the school was only open to vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers. Approximately one fifth of all pupils were being educated on site. Just over half of vulnerable pupils and half of pupils with an education, health and care plan were attending on site.

Main findings

- All pupils continue to study their usual subjects. In some subjects, teachers have changed the order of the curriculum. For example, in science and mathematics, teachers have reordered topics that require the use of specialist classroom equipment. This means that you and the governors have ensured that teachers can deliver the curriculum effectively in the current circumstances. This is the case for pupils who work in school and for those who are learning at home.
- In the months that followed the previous inspection, you took appropriate steps to strengthen subject leadership. Following the partial closure of the school in March 2020, subject leaders continued amending their curriculum plans. As a result of this work, curriculum plans in mathematics, English and Spanish are ordered well and outline clearly what pupils must know and remember. However, there is more to do to ensure that curriculums are planned equally as well in other subjects. More recently, you have also acted to ensure that pupils benefit from a broad curriculum for as long as possible.
- Teachers have developed a range of effective approaches to deliver the curriculum remotely and to check on pupils' work. For example, in science pupils watch recordings of practical experiments. You have systems in place to check whether pupils are accessing learning. Staff use this information to keep parents and carers updated. Pupils and their parents are positive about the remote education that teachers provide.

- For the most part, pupils attending school access the same lessons as pupils who are learning at home. However, those attending school benefit from additional opportunities. For instance, in food technology, they enjoy cooking and other practical aspects. Some pupils working in school also receive appropriate support with number and reading. A small group of pupils who speak English as an additional language are receiving more thorough support. This is to advance their knowledge of English so that they can access the curriculum.
- You have introduced a range of strategies to improve pupils' reading skills. For example, pupils have access to suitable resources to help to develop their fluency and comprehension. Pupils have opportunities to read regularly and leaders have ensured that they can access a wide range of books. Leaders plan to check on pupils' reading knowledge when they return to school. You intend to use this information to identify those pupils who need further support with reading.
- Leaders have effective systems to check on the well-being of those vulnerable pupils who are working at home. You also ensure that vulnerable pupils can access education whether they are attending school or learning remotely. For example, you and the governors have ensured that vulnerable pupils have suitable electronic devices so that they can access their learning from home.
- Teachers continue to deliver the usual curriculum to all pupils in Year 11. Staff provide a range of support for this group to promote their motivation, confidence and well-being. These pupils also benefit from appropriate guidance to prepare them for the next stage in their education, employment or training.
- Staff provide pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) with effective support to keep up with their learning. For example, those pupils with SEND learning at home benefit from the extra help teaching assistants provide. In school, this group of pupils also receive appropriate additional support from staff to access the curriculum. For instance, pupils with SEND in Year 7 profit from extra support to develop their reading skills.
- Governors have an accurate knowledge of the school's priorities and provide you and other senior leaders with an appropriate balance of challenge and support. Members of the governing body have ensured that all pupils can access learning, both in school and remotely. Governors have overseen leaders' work to further develop the key stage 3 curriculum, including ensuring that all pupils can study music.
- External support from the local authority has helped you to refine your systems to check on the quality of pupils' learning. You have also received effective support from a teaching school to further develop subject leadership.

This support has had a positive effect on subject leaders' curriculum expertise.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with you and other senior leaders. We met with a group of subject leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. We also met with representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We reviewed the school's curriculum plans and examples of teaching materials. We spoke with pupils in both key stages 3 and 4 about their experiences of learning in school and remotely. We checked on the school's systems to monitor pupils' engagement and attendance. We also reviewed responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 32 free-text responses, and 52 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Emmett
Her Majesty's Inspector