

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



11 March 2021

Lee Ratcliffe
Headteacher
Calderstones Schools
Harthill Road
Liverpool
Merseyside
L18 3HS

Dear Mr Ratcliffe

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Calderstones School

Following my remote inspection with Lucy Bruce, 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 two successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in May 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.

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

- develop whole-school strategies to support pupils with weak reading skills when they join the school.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, a new special educational needs coordinator and two subject leaders have joined the school. The deputy headteacher left at the end of December 2020. Governors are currently in the process of recruiting to this post.
- During the autumn term, approximately three quarters of pupils spent at least one week working remotely. Pupils in Years 7 and 10 were affected more than others, due to their need to self-isolate more frequently.
- At the time of this inspection, a small proportion of pupils were being educated on site. Around nine out of every 10 pupils were learning at home. Approximately one quarter of vulnerable pupils and one third of pupils with an education, health and care plan were attending on site.

Main findings

- Despite the challenges posed by the third lockdown, you and your team have maintained a clear focus on improving the quality of education and promoting the well-being of staff and pupils. Parents and carers recognise all that has been done to ensure that pupils continue to benefit from an education. They appreciate your efforts, and those of the school team, during the current circumstances.
- Before the pandemic, subject leaders completed a full review of the curriculum and revised the order in which subject content is taught. Leaders have drawn on current research and thought carefully about how the different parts of the curriculum should be put together. Although curriculum subjects are at different stages of development, all subject leaders are working appropriately to make further improvements.
- The restrictions imposed by COVID-19 have had an impact on the delivery of practical subjects such as computing and physical education. Suitable adjustments have been made to the order in which some of the subject content is being taught. For instance, topics that rely less on practical work have been brought forward in computing as these aspects lend themselves better to remote learning. The teaching of controversial issues in religious education has been pushed back until all pupils are able to engage in full discussion and debate.
- Pupils working remotely, including students in the sixth form, receive a mix of recorded and 'live' lessons that follow the school's usual timetable. Staff are

finding it harder to check pupils' understanding when they work remotely. However, they are working out solutions, for instance by providing online surveys.

- Staff are on hand to provide additional support for vulnerable pupils who are learning on site. These pupils study the same curriculum as those learning remotely. However, pupils on site are also beginning to access specialist resources in some practical subjects, for example design technology.
- Staff are making sure that the necessary curriculum content is covered for all courses in Years 11 and 13. Assessments from the autumn term have been used to shape learning for the spring term. Students in the sixth form have received appropriate information, advice and guidance to help them plan for their next steps. As a result, many students in Year 13 have received offers of university places.
- Leaders' focus on promoting reading for pleasure has continued while pupils are working remotely. That said, some pupils struggle with reading when they join the school because their phonics knowledge is not secure. Leaders have not prioritised reading for pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. Some strategies are in place in individual departments, but there is not a whole-school approach to ensuring pupils can read with fluency and accuracy.
- Teachers regularly share ideas and strategies for meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Remote learning has posed its own challenges for many of these pupils, but you and other leaders have responded thoughtfully to find solutions. For instance, leaders have prioritised access to technology for pupils with SEND. This enables them to take part successfully in both live and recorded lessons.
- Thoughtful support from the governing body has been critical in ensuring the provision of education in the current circumstances. For example, governors have reviewed the school's key priorities and given greater importance to staff and student well-being. This is appreciated by staff, as indicated by their positive responses to the Ofsted staff survey. At the same time, governors are maintaining their focus on improving the curriculum through the challenge they provide as link governors of curriculum subjects.
- The local authority's school improvement service has worked closely with the school to provide targeted support. Subject network meetings, for instance, have provided a forum for subject leaders to share their curriculum thinking and learn from other schools. In addition, a productive partnership has been set up with another local secondary school to share strategies on implementing the curriculum.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, representatives of those responsible for governance and a representative of the local authority, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also reviewed a small sample of recorded video lessons and scrutinised curriculum documentation provided by the school. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 105 free-text responses, and we considered the 107 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 Liverpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nasim Butt
Her Majesty's Inspector