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10 March 2021

Ann Donaghy  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Donaghy

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Noel-Baker Academy**

Following my remote inspection with Deirdre Duignan, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) of your school on 23 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 special measures.

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 require special measures at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in July 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 every subject has an ambitious and challenging curriculum that enables all pupils to build knowledge and skills sequentially.

## **Context**

- Trustees have appointed a new headteacher since the previous section 5 inspection. You took up this position in September 2018. Since then you and the trustees have restructured the senior leadership team to include two deputy headteachers, four assistant headteachers and three associate assistant headteachers. You have restructured and clarified the roles and responsibilities of other leaders. Several new governors have been appointed to the Academy Governing Board (AGB).
- Across the autumn term 2020, a small number of pupils needed to isolate at home at some point due to COVID-19. This largely affected groups of pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Currently, most pupils are being educated at home. Almost three quarters of vulnerable pupils and pupils with an education, health care plan attend school on site.

## **Main findings**

- Leaders are determined for all pupils to receive a broad education despite COVID-19. You ensure that education is available to all pupils whether on site or at home.
- You have not let the challenges posed by the pandemic hamper your drive to improve the school. Senior leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. Staff are proud to be part of this school. Most parents and carers have increasingly positive views about the school, its improvement and leadership. Leaders are changing the culture of the school.
- Leaders are developing the breadth and depth of the curriculum. You are keen that all pupils 'learn the very best that has been thought and said'. In some subjects, for example English, leaders are developing an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum. Pupils learn to appreciate the origins of English language and literature. Not all subject curriculums identify clearly enough the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn, and in what order.
- Leaders use what they have learned since March 2020 to develop the remote education on offer. They seek the views of parents, pupils and teachers on the school's work. Leaders have used this information to adapt the remote education the school provides. Teachers use a mixture of paper-based resources, recorded and live online lessons to ensure that pupils continue to learn.

- Teachers have changed the order of some subject content while pupils are learning at home. For example, in physical education, pupils learn about nutrition, health and fitness as well as being set physical challenges.
- You continue to make sure that pupils in Year 11 access learning across all examination subjects. Teachers ensure that these pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education or training.
- Leaders make sure that all pupils in school, including vulnerable pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn the same curriculum as their peers at home. These pupils follow a timetable of lessons for all their subjects. Key staff give those pupils with SEND, who are learning at home, regular support.
- Leaders ensure that pupils who struggle to read get the help that they need. For example, pupils, including those working at home, benefit from lessons to improve their reading. Staff make sure that learning builds on the phonic knowledge and reading skills that pupils already have.
- Trustees and members of the AGB, challenge and support leaders to improve the school's provision, including the curriculum. They are ambitious for the school and aspirational for every pupil.
- The leadership capacity of the school has grown and improved since the previous inspection. Senior leaders and the trust officers support leaders and teachers to improve curriculum planning and teaching. They provide training and coaching for leaders. The impact is evident in the school's improving curriculum ambition. The trust has supported the school in managing the many challenges posed by COVID-19.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you and members of the senior leadership team. We held meetings with curriculum leaders and the associate special needs coordinator. We held discussions with representatives of those responsible for governance and the academy trust deputy chief executive officer to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We reviewed examples of remote lessons and observed pupils in a reading lesson. We looked at information about the curriculum and other documents provided by school leaders. We considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 33 free-text comments, and 98 staff survey responses.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the L.E.A.D. Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Derby City local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Davies  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**