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Paul Cooper
Executive principal
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Dear Mr Cooper

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Lightcliffe Academy

Following my remote inspection with Matthew Vellensworth, 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 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 November 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:

- be more aware of the views and concerns of all staff so that effective action to provide an education is sustained.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes to the senior leadership team. The previous headteacher and an assistant principal have left the school. An executive principal was appointed in September 2020. At the same time, a vice-principal was appointed head of school. A new vice-principal joined the school in October 2020. A new assistant principal with responsibility for teaching and learning works at the school for one day a week.
- During the autumn term 2020, approximately four fifths of pupils were educated from home at some point. All pupils in Year 9 spent some time being educated at home.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately one in twenty pupils were being educated on site. One in three vulnerable pupils were being educated on site. Approximately one in five pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending on site.

Main findings

- Leaders are working with pupils and families to help pupils to access the curriculum. Leaders have checked that pupils have access to appropriate technology. They have provided pupils with additional resources where necessary. Leaders have provided specialist materials in subjects such as art to offer more scope to the curriculum.
- Leaders are working with teachers to improve the quality of remote learning. They have chosen to provide pupils with a mixture of live and pre-recorded lessons. Leaders believe that this gives pupils a balanced approach, with time away from the computer screen.
- Teachers check pupils' attendance at the daily timetable of lessons. They have devised a system to check pupils' engagement. This includes checking the quality of the work that pupils submit. The pupils we talked to value the work being set by their teachers. Teachers review the quality of remote education. The improvements they made over time have led to increasing levels of pupil engagement.
- Teachers talked to Year 11 and Year 13 pupils before their return in September to check their learning and welfare needs. Teachers adapted their teaching to address gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders are checking that pupils are continuing to study their chosen subjects. Leaders are also

providing pupils with guidance to support their next steps in education and training.

- Teachers and teaching assistants are continuing to support pupils who need help with reading. They provide one-to-one reading support on site and for pupils at home. Teachers are also helping pupils to understand new vocabulary. Leaders are introducing new strategies to strengthen pupils' comprehension and their speaking and listening skills. The timing of some of these initiatives has been delayed because of the impact of COVID-19.
- Leaders maintain a particular focus on the needs of vulnerable pupils. They make sure these pupils can access remote education. Where necessary, they have provided technology and resources. They also check how well these pupils are taking part in education at home and at school. Leaders make regular contact with pupils and families to check their learning and well-being.
- Teachers are working with teaching assistants to support pupils with SEND. Teaching assistants provide support to pupils on site and those working remotely. Teachers are adapting remote education to improve access for pupils with SEND. This is encouraging more pupils with SEND to take part in remote education.
- Governors check leaders' actions to provide education at this time. They hold discussions with leaders to check how pupils are responding to remote education. Governors check how catch up funding is being used to support more vulnerable pupils. They also check on leaders' actions to support pupils' well-being. Governors were less aware of the concerns raised by a significant minority of staff and how these could affect education provision at this time.
- The trust's leaders continue to check the quality of education. Leaders have worked with another trust to check the quality of curriculum plans. School leaders are working with this trust to develop strategies to help pupils remember more over time. Pupils said they were beginning to use these strategies in the classroom.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with senior leaders to discuss actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. We talked to the co-chief executive officers. We also talked to curriculum leaders and two groups of school staff. We held meetings with two members of the governing body, including the chair. We talked to a group of pupils who were attending school.

We looked at examples of remote education and examples of pupils' work. We considered 64 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 128 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including eight free-text responses.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the co-chief executive officers of the Abbey Multi-Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Calderdale. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector