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Isabel Webb
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Dear Mrs Webb

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Wirksworth Junior School

Following my remote inspection with Shaheen Hussain, Seconded Inspector, of your school on 25 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 June 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 curriculum plans so that subject knowledge is clearly identified and sequenced.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, a number of staff have left the school. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed. There is a new chair of the governing body. A number of governors are new to role.
- Around 25% of pupils had to be educated remotely at some point during the autumn term 2020.
- Currently, a large majority of pupils are learning remotely. Around 40% of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are vulnerable continue to be educated in school.

Main findings

- Leaders have taken the necessary actions to ensure that all pupils receive education in the current circumstances. They have listened to the views of parents and carers to improve the remote education on offer. Parents recognise and appreciate this. A typical comment was, 'The school has done particularly well during the latest lockdown.'
- Before the start of the pandemic, leaders had begun to improve the quality of subject curriculum plans. Leaders have set out clearly the skills that they want pupils to gain, and when. However, leaders have not identified the knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember over time. The plans do not enable teaching staff to understand what knowledge pupils need, so that pupils become more secure in their understanding of how to apply these skills.
- Leaders have trained staff to deliver the curriculum remotely. Teachers provide daily live lessons in English and mathematics as well as other activities. Pupils have regular opportunities to check their learning in live lessons as well as individually with staff. Teachers ensure that pupils' learning includes activities which support their well-being.
- Leaders and teachers have adapted some aspects of the curriculum so that all pupils can continue to learn despite restrictions due to COVID-19. For example, in physical education (PE) teachers changed the order of some of the curriculum content. Pupils have spent time learning about control and balance techniques as they are not able to do their usual PE. In music, pupils are focusing on the elements of music such as rhythm, rather than singing, at the current time.

- Leaders ensure that the well-being of all vulnerable pupils is a priority. They keep in regular contact with these pupils when they are learning remotely. Leaders monitor pupils' engagement with remote education and offer support when it is needed.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved the curriculum for reading. Leaders have made sure that pupils have access to books that match their phonics knowledge. For pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read, teachers provide extra support.
- Leaders are working to improve the support for pupils with SEND. Pupils attending school in person continue to get the help that they are used to. Those learning from home have regular opportunities to speak with staff about any work they find difficult. Leaders are developing the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Governors check that leaders' actions are having a positive impact in the current circumstances. They have received training so that they can hold leaders to account for the improvements that leaders are making to the curriculum.
- Leaders value the support provided by the local authority, which has maintained a determined focus on helping the school to improve. This support has included training to leaders and governors. Together with the local authority, leaders have balanced managing the challenges of the current circumstances alongside ongoing school improvement. They are aware that there is still work to do to improve the curriculum.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and subject leaders. We met with four members 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 a selection of recorded lessons and pupils' work. We observed, remotely, some pupils reading to a member of staff. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 32 free-text responses, and 12 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Damien Turrell
Her Majesty's Inspector