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Caroline Howarth
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Dear Mrs Howarth

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Field Lane Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Alison Colenso, 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 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 October 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 checks across the curriculum to help teachers establish what pupils have learned and to address gaps in pupils' knowledge
- develop governors' questioning skills to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions.

Context

- Following the last inspection, the previous headteacher left the school in December 2019. You became the substantive headteacher in January 2020, having moved from within the Brighter Futures multi-academy trust.
- During the autumn term 2020, a small number of pupils had to learn from home.
- At the time of this inspection, nearly 80% of all pupils were being educated remotely. Most vulnerable pupils were attending on site. Approximately 80% of pupils with education, health and care plans were also coming into school.

Main findings

- In the current circumstances, pupils are continuing their education in all subjects. Teaching is a mixture of live and recorded lessons. Pupils send their completed work back to their teacher online. Trustees have supported leaders to source additional technology from other schools within the trust. As a result, all pupils have a device to take part in the planned learning online.
- New leadership has placed curriculum development at the centre of its work. This has continued throughout the pandemic. Leaders have worked collaboratively with the multi-academy trust to introduce a new curriculum. The curriculum has been designed to increase pupils' enthusiasm for learning. At the same time, curriculum plans set out expectations for the knowledge and skills pupils should develop. In the current circumstances, leaders have prioritised implementing the new curriculum in mathematics, reading and writing. In these subjects, teaching focuses on ensuring that pupils remember what they have learned. For example, in mathematics, teachers ask questions to check pupils' understanding of concepts taught and address any gaps in pupils' knowledge. This new focus is also helping pupils to apply their knowledge to answer more complex questions.
- In reading, writing and mathematics, leaders are now checking how well pupils learn the new curriculum. This includes subject content that is currently being delivered remotely. As a result, leaders and staff know which knowledge teaching needs to go over again, either on site or at home. However, this is not the case with subjects such as history and geography. The pandemic has delayed leaders' actions to rectify this. Leaders need to do more to assure themselves that pupils learn and understand the knowledge set out in the curriculum.

- Teachers plan activities to help pupils on site keep in contact with those at home. For example, pupils are invited to weekly catch-up sessions. This offers them an opportunity to talk to their friends. Leaders have focused on the school's values to provide incentives for pupils who work hard. They have consulted pupils about the types of rewards they would like. When teaching online, staff praise pupils whose attitudes reflect the school's values.
- A new phonics approach was introduced in September 2019. During the national restrictions, leaders have adapted this approach to make it work for remote education. All pupils have a daily reading session online, including vulnerable pupils and children in the early years class. Staff plan a range of activities to develop pupils' understanding of how to blend and segment sounds. Teachers select books to match pupils' current phonic knowledge. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy these lessons because they are fun and lively. The culture of reading is developing. In school, teachers promote different authors and each class has regular story-time sessions. Leaders have already invested in new books and redecorated the school library. However, pupils told inspectors that they are not routinely reading at home. Leaders plan to continue their focus on encouraging pupils to read for pleasure.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the same provision at home as they would in school. Leaders have ensured that pupils who need additional therapy continue to receive this during the current circumstances. To help pupils learn remotely, pupils have resource packs sent home to meet their specific needs. For pupils attending on site, extra help personalised to their academic and pastoral needs continues. This is the case for pupils with SEND and those who are vulnerable.
- Governors are informed about the education pupils are receiving during the national lockdown. They support leaders' decisions regarding the curriculum and remote education. Sometimes, however, governors accept leaders' actions without evaluating the intended impact. Governors need to ask more challenging questions about leaders' work to improve the curriculum.
- The trust brokers a range of support for leaders, including the school improvement services from the local authority. The trust also prioritises resources to train and develop subject leaders.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you and other senior leaders, including staff from the multi-academy trust. We also spoke to pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance, and a representative of the local authority. We discussed leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also sampled recorded lessons and listened to pupils read. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 13 written responses, and 14 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Brighter Futures 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

Daniel-John Constable
Her Majesty's Inspector