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11 March 2021

Francesca Humberstone
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Dear Mrs Humberstone

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Truro Learning Academy

Following my remote inspection with Lydia Pride, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), 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:

- build on improvements to subject leadership so that it is consistent across the curriculum
- improve long-term curriculum planning so that subject plans are organised more coherently and teachers use assessment to greater effect.

Context

- Since the last inspection, you have been appointed as the new head of school. A new lead teacher has started, who deputises for you when needed. Eight new teachers have been appointed.
- Across the autumn term 2020, approximately a fifth of pupils had to be educated remotely. No pupils in 'bubbles' were sent home. Those learning remotely were individuals who had to self-isolate.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately two thirds of pupils were being educated remotely. Approximately, one third of vulnerable pupils and just under half of pupils with education, health and care plans were also learning in school.

Main findings

- You, other leaders and staff have shown resolve and dedication to provide education in the current circumstances. For example, you have worked hard to ensure that pupils have the technology to access learning when at home. You have focused appropriately on bringing about greater stability at the school following a period of regular change in staffing. Consequently, the team ethic among staff is strengthening. At the same time, you have skilfully worked on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.
- Your work on improving subject leadership has had mixed results. Training and support provided by the trust have led to leaders of English and mathematics having a greater impact. However, those leading other subjects have not had the same chance to improve learning in their areas of responsibility. As a result, teachers' planning and use of assessment are underdeveloped in subjects such as history, geography and science.
- You have made regular checks on your approach to remote learning. Staff have received useful training in delivering remote education using online platforms. Pupils are familiar with how to use these platforms. Pupils say that they appreciate the opportunities to meet their teachers and peers online. Staff check carefully how well pupils are engaging in lessons, whether they are learning remotely or on site. As a result, useful amendments are made to lessons by teachers to support pupils' engagement.

- You and other leaders have taken effective action to provide support for vulnerable pupils in the current circumstances. You have established effective approaches to teaching English and mathematics for those in school, as well as those learning remotely. You continue to prioritise reading. You have provided helpful training to staff to revisit their teaching of phonics. Younger pupils have access to daily phonics lessons. Older pupils are encouraged to read, and enjoy reading through the sharing of books by teachers and reading at home.
- Your plans for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in the current circumstances are appropriate. The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has had a positive impact. For example, she has ensured that pupils' needs are more sharply identified and, with your support, that teachers take greater responsibility for the learning of pupils with SEND. Consequently, leaders and teachers make considered adaptations so that pupils with SEND continue to access learning.
- Governance is effective. The strategic partner holds the head of school to account effectively. Useful and considered support is utilised well by leaders and teachers. For example, the trust has provided wide-ranging training in the use of technology to support remote learning.
- Effective use has been made of external support and challenge. For example, trust and school leaders work closely with a national leader of education. This has led to an acceleration in improvements to leadership and management.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, your lead teacher, subject leaders, your strategic partner and the deputy chief executive officer to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also met with the SENCo, your lead for disadvantaged pupils and a group of pupils. We watched recordings of pupils reading to a member of staff. We scrutinised examples of remote learning, leaders' evaluations of their remote offer, and examples of reports provided to the school by the trust and external partners. We reviewed information on the school website. We looked at responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 20 free-text responses, and 17 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Aspire Academy multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Barnes
Her Majesty's Inspector