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Nicola Taylor  
Executive Principal  
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Kent  
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Dear Mrs Taylor

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of The High Weald Academy**

Following my remote inspection with Aimee Floyd, 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in April 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:

- increase the number of pupils accessing the full remote education offer
- ensure that all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the additional support for their learning that they need.

### **Context**

- The interim executive headteacher and three assistant principals have left the school since the last inspection. In addition, there have been new appointments to the role of interim chief executive officer of the Brook Learning Trust as well as to the chair of the board of trustees.
- All pupils were educated remotely for the last four days of the autumn term 2020. The school was forced to close at this time because of COVID-related staff absence. Year 10 were the most affected year group over the autumn term 2020 because this year group had two separate periods of working from home.
- At the time of this inspection almost all pupils were being educated remotely. A quarter of vulnerable pupils and a tenth of pupils with SEND were attending school.
- Leaders were not dealing with any staff absences relating to COVID-19 at the time of the inspection.

### **Main findings**

- Leaders had prepared well for the move to provide remote education in January 2021. They had trained staff and pupils to use the new technology in the summer term 2020. The method of delivery was trialled with those pupils who had to self-isolate in the autumn term. Therefore, when the school partially closed in January, pupils were confident in their use of the remote learning offer. Leaders had also made sure that almost all pupils had access to the internet and appropriate devices at home. A very small number of pupils still rely on paper resources.
- As well as preparing for remote learning delivery, leaders have carried out an overhaul of the curriculum. Since September 2020, the school has put in place a coherent plan across the school for what pupils learn and in what order in each subject. There is still more work to do to establish consistency and quality across all areas. Through their monitoring work, leaders are focusing on areas that still need to improve.
- Teachers are offering five 'live' lessons daily to pupils learning at home. This mirrors the normal school day. The range of subjects taught is the same as when all pupils are on site. There have been some adaptations or reordering

of the curriculum content, but these have been minor. Teachers make sure that pupils receive timely feedback about the work they complete.

- The executive headteacher and the head of school are focused on checking the quality and quantity of work provided and tracking how well pupils take part in the remote learning. They know this is especially important as the vast majority of pupils are at home. Their monitoring has found that while nearly all pupils join in at the beginning of the day, a minority of pupils miss some lessons, particularly later in the afternoon. As a result, some pupils are falling behind. Leaders are now putting in place different approaches to increase pupils' motivation. They are working hard to re-engage those pupils who are missing out.
- All vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEND have a member of staff who regularly checks on their well-being and learning. The special educational needs and or/disabilities coordinator (SENCo) briefs staff every week in her 'spotlight' meetings about pupils with SEND and how to support their learning. Those pupils currently in school are benefiting from their usual additional support. Pupils with SEND learning from home are not, which is slowing learning for some.
- Pupils in Year 11 are all learning remotely. Leaders' systems for checking on their attendance and quality of work picked up that some pupils' motivation had dropped off. As a result, teachers recently put on a virtual 'learning conference' for all Year 11. This helped refocus pupils on their career aspirations and their current study. The event was well attended and leaders have since seen increased pupil commitment to their learning.
- Trustees have made sure that systems are in place to offer education to all pupils in this partial closure period. They are assuring themselves that leaders are making every effort to encourage pupils to participate. Trustees have regularly checked on the quality and range of work that is provided and have also followed up on the school's processes for checking on absence.
- The school has set up a sequence of training and development for staff that has focused well on the curriculum and its leadership. Collaborating with other schools in the trust on curriculum development has helped leaders bring about worthwhile improvements. Teachers have also benefited from being part of a larger professional community. In addition, the school has also taken up the offer to work with other academy trusts. The support from one trust has led to significant improvements to the mathematics curriculum.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you in your role as both executive headteacher and interim chief executive officer for the trust, other senior

leaders, pupils, staff, and the chair of the board of trustees to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at examples of teaching materials and considered a range of documentation provided by the school. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and 15 responses to the staff questionnaire.

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

Yours sincerely

Yasmin Maskatiya  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**