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Claire McKeown
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Dear Mrs McKeown

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of St Thomas Cantilupe C of E Academy

Following my remote inspection with Lesley Yates, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 3 March 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.

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 December 2018.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) 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:

- continue to support the development of the foundation subject curriculum leaders so that they can successfully implement further improvements within their curriculum areas.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant staffing changes. A new headteacher was appointed in June 2019. Six teachers and a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) were also appointed. The school's governing body was disbanded and replaced by a strategic task group.
- During the autumn term 2020, approximately a quarter of pupils were educated remotely at some point. The Year 1 and Year 2 'bubbles' closed during this period.
- At the time of the inspection, approximately half of the pupils were being educated on site. About a third of vulnerable pupils and two thirds of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were receiving education in school.

Main findings

- Leaders have put in place an effective remote education offer so that all pupils can continue their education in the current circumstances. You have made sure that remote education is available for pupils. Pupils know that teachers expect them to follow a similar timetable to their friends in school. There are clear expectations about the completion of work. Pupils welcome feedback they get from teachers. They say it is useful and that they are given additional support if they find something difficult.
- You and your senior leadership team are improving the curriculum, the teaching of reading and the provision for pupils with SEND. You are raising the expectations teachers have of pupils. Leaders' effectiveness is improving at all levels. For example, middle leaders can talk confidently about the positive changes they have implemented in their subjects.
- Before the pandemic started, you were writing curriculum plans that identify the precise knowledge that pupils will learn and the order in which they will learn it. You rightly chose to improve English and mathematics first. As a result, improvements in these subjects are further ahead. For example, you improved the teaching of reading. Developments in the foundation subjects are not as further along, because some work has been delayed due to the COVID-19 restrictions.
- Currently, whether at home or in school, pupils are studying their usual subjects. In many cases, existing plans are being followed. In English and

mathematics, for example, pupils are following work in the same order as they would in school. Staff will continue with planned work in these subjects when the pupils return to school on 8 March 2021. This means that you can quickly build on what the pupils have learnt before, without having to revisit prior learning. In some subjects, content has been reordered to make activities more manageable at home. In science, for example, you have restructured plans so that practical lessons using resources that are not available at home, will be carried out in school.

- Pupils' reading skills continue to be developed through a daily structured phonics and reading programme. This includes directed practice and independent reading. Staff have made e-books available to pupils at home and make sure that pupils have books matched to their ability. Leaders monitor this carefully and support pupils if they are not accessing the system regularly.
- During the first lockdown, leaders identified pupils and their families at risk of becoming vulnerable. These pupils have been encouraged to come into school. Over time, the number of vulnerable pupils learning in school has increased. The offer in school for vulnerable pupils and those with SEND mirrors that for those pupils working at home. Pupils in school have also benefited from additional bespoke support. For example, being taught to ride a bike.
- The SENCo has been reviewing systems that support vulnerable pupils and those with SEND effectively. The SENCo works alongside teachers to ensure that pupils with SEND receive work that is tailored to meet their individual needs. Additional support is put in place to ensure pupils with SEND do not fall behind their peers. The SENCo continues to work in partnership with agencies, such as the educational psychologist and speech and language therapist. Annual reviews are up to date and, where appropriate, planned for the summer term.
- Trust leaders and members of the newly formed strategic task group hold leaders to account effectively. While they are mindful of the delays caused by the pandemic, they continue in their work to assure themselves that the best possible education is being provided for pupils. Governors have a particular focus on the educational provision for vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEND. They hold regular discussions with leaders to check the provision for pupils' learning, safety and well-being.
- Leaders welcome the external support from the new school improvement partner. This joint work is having a positive impact on developing the effectiveness of leadership in the school. For example, you worked together to improve the attendance of vulnerable pupils.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, teaching staff, pupils and a representative of the multi-academy trust. We also met with representatives of the strategic task group and your school improvement partner, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at minutes of trust meetings, remote education resources and information on the school's website, and observed pupils reading to an adult. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, six free-text responses, and 31 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the strategic task group, the chief executive officer of the Diocese of Hereford multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Herefordshire, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Herefordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Eve Morris
Her Majesty's Inspector