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Andrew Wakefield
Principal
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946 Bristol Road South
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Dear Mr Wakefield

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of The Edge Academy

Following my remote inspection with Tim Hill, 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 special measures.

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 was judged to require special measures at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in June 2018.

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:

- plan remote learning for pupils in more manageable amounts and ensure that pupils have access to more timely additional support
- develop the information, communication and technology (ICT) curriculum to enable pupils to have the skills and knowledge to access learning using a range of technological hardware and software
- further develop the provision for physical education (PE) through the well-being curriculum, especially in terms of how pupils develop and build on their physical knowledge and skills over time.

Context

- Since the last inspection there has been a high number of staffing changes. A new vice-principal and two assistant principals have joined the school, along with lead teachers for science and mathematics. Eight teaching staff have left the school. There is a new chair of the governing body and three new governors.
- During most of the autumn term 2020, relatively low numbers of pupils experienced remote education as a result of COVID-19. However, near the end of the autumn term, the number of pupils who were educated remotely because of COVID-19 rose to 20%.
- All the school's pupils are vulnerable. At the time of this inspection approximately two thirds of pupils were being educated remotely, including a very small number of pupils who have an education, health and care plan.

Main findings

- Leaders are providing pupils with a similar curriculum to that in place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. They have adapted the curriculum, with some success, so that it can be accessed by pupils being educated remotely. Leaders provide remote education through a blend of paper-based work packs, online resources and pre-recorded lessons. Some learning is provided through live online sessions such as the cookery masterclasses. Staff provide pupils with all the physical resources they need to complete remote learning, including ingredients for the cookery classes.
- For a significant number of pupils, their ability to fully access and complete the remote learning online is hindered because of limited or no access to suitable technology. Leaders have only recently begun to develop the school's ICT curriculum and many pupils have poor ICT skills. Consequently, some pupils are solely reliant on the work packs. The packs are delivered on a three-weekly cycle and contain large volumes of work. Some pupils are unable to get help in a timely way when they are stuck, which stalls their

learning. Feedback on work completed is not received until some time after it is submitted, which limits the impact of the feedback.

- The school uses an off-site provision to deliver PE. However, this provision has been closed during the lockdown period so pupils' access to PE has been very limited. The school's well-being curriculum incorporates the planned provision for PE. Leaders have a clear vision about what they would like to achieve in the PE provision, but currently pupils' learning in this subject needs further development.
- Leaders have made sensible decisions about adapting the curriculum in the current circumstances. For example, some of the English subject content has been reordered so that more challenging units can be delivered face to face when pupils return to school full time. Art units that require specialist resources have also been delayed until pupils return to school.
- Teachers have a detailed overview of what education pupils have received both remotely and at school. They are using this information to plan the curriculum carefully for when all pupils are on site to ensure that any learning that was missed is covered in school.
- Leaders place a high priority on reading. There is a structured approach to the teaching of phonics and pupils have reading books matched to the sounds they are learning. Pupils learning remotely do not benefit from the intensive additional support that pupils in school receive. However, staff ensure that they provide pupils who are accessing education remotely with a range of reading books, and actively encourage and reward pupils to read widely and often.
- When pupils join the school, leaders seek to gain as much information about pupils' aspirations and their prior learning as possible. This includes information about the programmes of study and examination courses they were following at their previous schools. Leaders then make every effort to help pupils in Year 11 continue with these courses. This includes liaising with their previous schools to enable pupils to continue some lessons there.
- Leaders responsible for special educational needs and pastoral support have a strong understanding of pupils' additional needs. As well as additional academic support, leaders have ensured that pupils have access to a range of support to meet their social, emotional and mental health needs. This provision is also available to pupils who are being educated remotely. Leaders are working hard to engage with some pupils who are reluctant to attend school. Over time, they have been successful in getting more pupils into school, albeit for a short period of time for some of those pupils.
- Governors have a detailed understanding of how leaders have planned and delivered remote education and have maintained an oversight of this throughout the third lockdown. They scrutinise the information which leaders

provide and challenge them effectively to ensure that their actions are continuing to improve the school.

- The school has received effective support from an adviser who was commissioned through the local authority. The adviser has supported and challenged leaders to help them focus on the most pressing school improvement priorities. They have a clear understanding of where improvements have been made but have also helped to focus leaders on the right actions to further develop the curriculum.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to the principal, the vice and assistant principals, the leader responsible for special educational needs, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance, and an adviser commissioned through the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also reviewed samples of pupils' work and recorded lessons. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. We reviewed eight free-text parent responses, and 18 staff questionnaires. The lead inspector reviewed a sample of minutes from the governing body's meetings. A range of information relating to attendance, behaviour and the curriculum was reviewed.

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

Yours sincerely

Ann Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector