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Jim Henderson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Henderson

**Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Woodlands Community College**

Following my remote inspection with Harry Ingham, 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.

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 four successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in January 2019.

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:

- strengthen the planning and sequencing of knowledge and skills in all subjects so that pupils deepen their understanding consistently well.

### **Context**

- Since the previous section 5 inspection, the school has become part of Reach Cooperative Trust, which is made up of several Southampton schools. All remain under local authority control. The governing body has been reconstituted, with several new members having joined since September 2019. A new deputy headteacher also joined the school in September 2019.
- During the autumn term, approximately 10% of pupils had to be educated remotely for a short period of time. No whole classes or year groups had to self-isolate.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately 15% of pupils were being educated at school. Approximately 25% of pupils who are vulnerable and 20% of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending on site. This includes most of the pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

### **Main findings**

- Leaders and governors are clearly determined to ensure that pupils continue to receive education in the current circumstances. They adapted their approach after governors' consultation with parents and carers and pupils had identified the different preferences of pupils learning at home. For example, pupils are now able to access a variety of live and pre-recorded lessons, as well as paper-based work.
- Staff ensure that pupils learning at home have access to subject-specific resources. For example, pupils studying GCSE art have been provided with painting materials. Pupils at home receive timely help and feedback from their teachers. Leaders' tracking of pupils' engagement in learning from home shows that it has improved recently and is particularly high for pupils in Year 11.
- Teachers have adapted the curriculum to better meet the needs of pupils learning at home. Wisely, they have altered the order in which some topics are taught. For example, in personal, social and health education (PSHE), some more sensitive content will be taught when all pupils return to school. In physical education, additional lessons on well-being and fitness are being provided. Most pupils who are learning in school are given the same work as pupils at home. However, rightly, pupils with SEND and some vulnerable pupils receive additional support to better meet their needs.

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have prioritised improving the quality of the curriculum. Leaders' decisions about what is the most important knowledge to be taught, and the best order in which to teach that knowledge, are further developed in some subjects than in others. For example, in science, plans show how key ideas are carefully sequenced so that pupils build on what they already know. However, in other subjects, such as English and physical education, it is not as clear what leaders want pupils to know by the end of their time in school.
- Developing the quality of provision for pupils with SEND is central to leaders' ambition to improve the school. Although the circumstances of the pandemic have delayed some of the impact of their plans, leaders' work to raise the profile of SEND is starting to be successful. Staff now all have access to information about pupils' specific needs that they can use when planning how pupils will learn the curriculum. Staff have received training in how to adapt and structure activities to help pupils learn. Leaders' monitoring of teaching and the curriculum now includes a specific focus on SEND.
- Leaders' introduction of a nurture group in Year 7 has been well thought through. The curriculum followed by pupils in this class is carefully adapted to help them catch up with literacy. Progress has also been made in prioritising literacy across the school. For example, leaders have identified subject-specific vocabulary that pupils need to be taught. Leaders' monitoring of the impact of various approaches in place to support the development of reading is in its early stages.
- Despite the challenges of the past year, leaders have made some improvements to how pupils' behaviour is managed. Pupils told us that behaviour around the school was much better last term than previously.
- Before March 2020, leaders' focus on improving pupils' attendance led to a reduction in persistent absence. This work has stalled during the last year because of the challenges of the pandemic. Further reducing pupils' absence remains leaders' priority.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's priorities and what leaders are doing to address them. The carefully chosen external support they have commissioned provides an additional and useful means of holding leaders to account for the school's development. In addition, the local authority provides support and training for leaders and staff. It has been particularly influential in supporting improvements in the curriculum and for the provision of pupils with SEND. School leaders are in the early stages of working with other schools within the trust to further develop this work.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, five governors (including the chair of the governing body), three subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and assistant coordinator, a group of pupils, a group of staff and two representatives of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also scrutinised some documentation relating to the work of governors. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 27 free-text responses, and 64 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**