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Dear Miss Rogers

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Gorse Ride Junior School

Following my remote inspection with Shazia Akram, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 4 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 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 September 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:

- accelerate the work already started to review planning in subjects other than English and mathematics. This is to ensure that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn well in all subjects across the curriculum.

Context

- Leadership and staffing have remained stable since the previous section 8 inspection. The chair of governors, who had been the vice-chair, was appointed in September 2020.
- Most pupils attended school during the autumn term. However, one class in Year 4 and Year 5 had to learn from home for a period of ten days due to COVID-19.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately 66% of all pupils on roll were learning remotely. Almost all pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding, 43% of pupils with an education, health and care plan and 64% of pupils with SEND were learning on site.

Main findings

- Leaders and governors are providing pupils with a comprehensive remote education offer. This offer has improved over time in consultation with parents and staff. Most remote education is delivered online, through pre-recorded activities. Staff are providing carefully considered support to pupils learning from home as well as those attending school. Teachers have made adaptations to planning in some subjects to make the learning more suitable for remote access.
- Leaders' work to improve planning in all subjects across the curriculum is underway, but progress has been hampered in recent months. Leaders have successfully established a consistent approach to the planning and teaching of English and mathematics. Leaders have identified that there is further work to do to ensure the planning and teaching in other subjects is as strong, such as considering the content pupils need to learn and the order in which this is taught, as well as developing teachers' subject knowledge.
- Staff are committed to doing all they can to support the most vulnerable pupils and children of key workers. Staff know pupils well and offer wide-ranging pastoral and emotional support. For example, leaders have set up a dedicated 'welfare' email address to support pupils and their families. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the education and care that the school is providing at this current time.

- Leaders continue to give pupils' reading a high priority. Leaders have implemented a phonics programme to support the systematic teaching of reading. All staff have been trained to deliver this. Staff are providing daily phonics sessions online and in school to all pupils who need help to catch up with their reading, including those with SEND. Pupils have access to books that help them practise the sounds they are learning. Through daily stories, and opportunities for pupils to read aloud, teachers are continuing to develop pupils' vocabulary and comprehension skills.
- Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND continue to receive the support they need, whether they are learning from home or at school. Pupils who are learning from home have the equipment and resources to help them access their learning in reading, writing and mathematics. The work they are provided with helps them learn and do well in these subjects. However, work planned in other subjects is not as carefully matched to their needs.
- Governors know the daily challenges that leaders are currently facing and offer the right balance of support and challenge. They are knowledgeable about the school and have assured themselves about the quality of education that pupils are currently receiving. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's priorities and are closely monitoring the impact of leaders' actions to improve the school.
- Leaders have wisely drawn on the experience and expertise of local authority officers. For example, leaders have used external coaching to strengthen the school's capacity to bring about essential improvements. Notably, this is helping leaders with their work to implement a consistent approach to planning and teaching in all curriculum subjects.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, representatives of those responsible for governance and a representative from the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at curriculum plans, pre-recorded lessons and pupils' work. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 107 free-text responses, and 32 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 Wokingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Frances Nation
Her Majesty's Inspector