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David Hayes
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Dear Mr Hayes

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of The De La Salle Academy

Following my remote inspection with Mark Quinn, 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 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 January 2020.

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:

- embed and refine their systems for assessing pupils and monitoring their engagement while learning remotely
- make sure that all pupils with gaps in their phonic knowledge continue to access appropriate support during any periods of remote learning.

Context

- Since the last inspection, a number of staff have been promoted within the school. For example, one member of staff has joined the senior leadership team. You start a new job leading a different school after Easter 2021. At the moment, you are dividing your time between both schools. The head of school has recently become the acting principal.
- In the autumn term 2020, just over two fifths of pupils were educated at home for a short period. Pupils in Year 11 were educated at home for the longest time.
- At the time of the inspection, a small proportion of pupils were being educated on the school site. This included one half of vulnerable pupils and one quarter of pupils with an education, health and care plan.

Main findings

- You have continued to focus on developing the school's curriculum. Subject leaders have developed their curriculums so that they link more closely to pupils' learning at primary school and further learning they may undertake once they leave the school. Despite this, subject curriculums are at different stages of development. Some subject leaders have thought deeply about the important knowledge they want pupils to learn, whereas others have not. You feel that recent disruption to education has impeded your efforts to improve the curriculum further. This is because you have found it difficult to evaluate what difference new curriculums are making to pupils' learning.
- Your actions during the pandemic have ensured that pupils can access an education. Where possible, pupils are still learning the usual curriculum. Pupils continue to study the full range of subjects. Often, teachers have gone to great lengths to maintain continuity. For example, pupils have the resources they need to continue to study the usual curriculum in art and design while learning at home.
- You have made significant improvements to the school's information technology systems during the current school year. This has enabled pupils learning at home to take part in three live lessons each day. Pupils are also expected to complete additional independent work. Teachers deliver the curriculum in a way that resembles classroom practice as closely as possible.

This approach provides continuity in pupils' learning. Pupils educated on the school site access the same live lessons as those who learn remotely.

- Teachers have been trialling several ways to assess pupils' learning when pupils work remotely. For example, pupils have recently completed formal assessments. Leaders understand the limitations in their current systems, such as the difficulty of recreating test conditions at home. They plan to develop these systems further.
- Teachers continue to deliver the usual curriculum to pupils in Year 11. Teachers are giving these pupils additional opportunities to demonstrate their attainment. Pupils in Year 11 have taken part in an extra lesson each day since September 2020. This has continued during the current circumstances. These extra lessons provide additional support during pupils' last year at the school.
- Leaders have recently improved their systems for monitoring pupils' attendance and engagement while they learn remotely. This has enabled them to improve the way that they support pupils who have poor attendance or who struggle to engage consistently with their learning. Despite this, these systems are new. There is still a small but significant number of pupils who refuse to engage with education at the present time.
- Leaders have prioritised improving the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All staff have received training on how to meet the needs of these pupils as part of normal classroom teaching. Teachers are using this learning to help them meet the needs of these pupils when they learn remotely. For example, teachers break activities down into small, manageable steps. They also provide clear explanations and demonstrations. This is helping to ensure that leaders maintain their focus on improving education for this group of pupils.
- Leaders have systems in place to support the weakest readers, including pupils with gaps in their phonic knowledge. Many of these systems rely on online programmes that pupils can access as they learn remotely. Despite this, leaders have not done enough to ensure that these pupils continue to take advantage of the support that they need to become fluent readers.
- Governors have increased their support for the school during the pandemic. They have overseen leaders' actions to provide education in the current circumstances. They have also made sure that leaders continue to focus on developing the curriculum. To this end, governors now link to different subjects. This is enabling them to hold subject leaders to account for the quality of their work.
- Leaders have managed to acquire support from different sources. This has helped them to develop some subject curriculums, such as in English.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior and middle leaders, governors, pupils, and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at a selection of evidence provided by leaders to show how the curriculum has been developed since the last inspection and how they are currently providing education. This included curriculum plans, examples of teaching materials and a sample of pupils' work. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including four free-text responses, and 23 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Will Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector