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Kirsty Nichols-Mackay
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Nichols-Mackay

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Monkseaton Middle School

Following my remote inspection with Matthew Vellensworth, 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 two successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in February 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:

- ensure that pupils who are not fluent and confident readers receive support to help them catch up quickly.

Context

- There have been significant changes to staffing and leadership since the previous inspection. The chair of the governing body is new to role. An assistant headteacher was appointed in January 2020.
- Across the autumn term 2020, around two thirds of pupils had to work from home for a period of time.
- At the time of the inspection, one third of pupils were attending school, with the remaining pupils accessing education remotely. Approximately three quarters of vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending school on site.

Main findings

- Leaders and governors have made it a priority to ensure that all pupils have access to education during this period of national restrictions. Leaders have listened to parents. As a result, the school has made improvements to the remote education offer. Because of these changes, the engagement of pupils working from home has increased.
- All pupils have access to the range of subjects that make up the school's usual curriculum. Leaders have made some changes to the sequencing of the curriculum to cover the content that was missed when pupils were not attending school during the national restrictions. Leaders are in the process of revising the school's curriculum plans in light of current teacher assessments.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils identified as vulnerable and the children of key workers have access to education on site. Most pupils attend. Pupils working from home have access to the same curriculum as those attending school. Teachers deliver a blend of recorded and 'live' lessons. They provide pupils with regular feedback and support with their learning. This is helping to improve pupils' engagement, including those pupils with SEND.
- Leaders have prioritised reading. Staff have received training on the newly implemented reading programmes. This is beginning to support the consistent delivery of teaching reading. Leaders recognise that there is more to do to ensure that the school's reading programme is delivered consistently well, so that pupils achieve as well as they should. There are clear plans in place to accelerate improvements in this area.

- Pupils have access to reading books, including those pupils who are working from home. This is helping pupils to develop a love of reading. However, some pupils who find it difficult to read fluently and confidently do not receive the support they need to help them catch up quickly when accessing education remotely.
- The special education needs coordinator works closely with external agencies to make sure pupils with SEND continue to receive the right support at the right time. These pupils have access to the school's full curriculum. Teachers have adapted some of the content to ensure that pupils can access the work. Key workers are assigned to pupils with SEND. They check on pupils' well-being and provide extra support, if needed.
- Governors know the school well. They recognise the school's strengths and where improvements need to be made. Despite the pandemic, governors continue to have regular meetings. They have rightly focused their discussions on the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning. Minutes of the governing body meetings demonstrate that they rigorously evaluate leaders' actions and hold them to account.
- The local authority has provided extensive support and challenge. They have brokered support from a national leader of education (NLE). The NLE has worked with school leaders to develop the curriculum and leadership. Leaders have embraced this support and made improvements in these areas.

Evidence

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

We also watched recorded clips of lessons and looked at governors' minutes. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 42 free-text responses, and 27 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 North Tyneside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jean Watt
Her Majesty's Inspector