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Dear Mrs Allen

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Roman Way First School

Following my remote inspection with Jo Evans, 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 special measures.

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 December 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 leadership capacity across the school, building more robust subject leadership
- improve assessment systems so that pupils' new learning builds securely on what they already know and remember.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, there have been many changes. The previous headteacher and an assistant headteacher have left. An interim headteacher has been appointed. The governing body has recruited new members and there is a new chair of governors. The school is due to become an academy in the near future.
- During autumn 2020, about two thirds of pupils received remote education at some point in the term. Pupils in Year 4 were affected by this more than others.
- At the time of this inspection, around two fifths of pupils were being educated in school. Almost all pupils identified as being vulnerable and all of those with an education, health and care plan were attending school.

Main findings

- Since the previous inspection, there has been an increasingly rigorous approach to school improvement processes. Leaders have changed curriculum planning in all subjects, and expectations are rising. Even so, leaders and staff know that further improvements to curriculum design and more staff training are needed. Throughout the past year, leaders have remained focused on these key improvement areas. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the pace of change.
- Currently, pupils learning in school and at home are doing all their usual subjects. However, learning in English, mathematics and science has been prioritised. In these subjects, staff have identified the key knowledge that pupils need to know and have established routines for pupils to revisit crucial content. Other subjects, such as languages, music and physical education, still happen, but activities are different from usual. In the main, this is to make them more manageable at home.
- The school uses an online platform to provide most remote learning. Teachers post work online every day. Pupils then do the work at a time to suit them and upload it so teachers can check it. Pupils in school follow a stricter timetable, and their lessons happen at set times. Whether at home or in school, lessons and activities are informed by the same curriculum plans and cover the same content. Pupils say that everyone gets frequent feedback

about their work. Once a week, classes come together online for a joint activity, so pupils can see and talk with their friends.

- If a pupil working at home does not upload work, staff contact them to check that all is okay. On top of this, staff make routine telephone calls home. They also keep in contact with any agencies working with families to make sure that the right support is in place.
- Whether at home or in school, pupils take part in phonics lessons and read every day. Pupils at home can access reading material online and parents can collect books from school. Throughout lockdown, the school has placed a strong emphasis on reading for pleasure and enjoying books.
- In all subjects, leaders are working on improving curriculum planning and whole-school practice. Some subjects, such as mathematics, are further ahead than others, but in all subjects, there is scope to strengthen leadership further and improve assessment. Staff know that it is hard to gauge how much pupils working at home have actually done for themselves. Making sure that assessment checks the right things is an important priority, and particularly so when pupils return to school after 8 March 2021.
- The provision of remote education has been a catalyst for improving communication with families. The school has provided plenty of information for parents to help with home learning. In addition, the school has provided laptops and technical advice. In their free-text responses to Ofsted's survey, parents expressed very positive views. Their written comments praised the school's actions to support children, academically and emotionally, during lockdown. Staff, too, feel supported at work.
- Currently, about half of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are in school. In all cases, school staff tailor work to pupils' particular needs and keep in close contact with home. As already noted, assessment of how well these pupils are doing could be better.
- Governors understand their role and receive regular reports about the school's actions to provide education at this time. They ask the right questions and have established routines for checking on the quality of the school's work.
- External support has focused on building leadership capacity in the school. The local authority and staff from two multi-academy trusts have provided effective advice and training to help with this. In addition, there has been a review of the school's governance and SEND provision. All of these actions are bringing more challenge and support to all aspects of the school's work.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, the chief executive officer of Endeavour Multi-Academy Trust, teaching staff, pupils, the chair and a parent governor to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at information on the school's website, curriculum plans and remote education resources. We observed a reading session. We considered responses to our online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 28 free-text responses, and 15 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 Worcestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye
Her Majesty's Inspector