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Miss Lindsay Jones
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Dear Miss Jones

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Lowedges Junior Academy

Following my remote inspection with Gary Rawlings, 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.

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 October 2019.

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:

- make sure that the developments in phonics are mirrored across other subjects so that teachers and subject leaders are clear what pupils know in each subject and what they need to learn next.

Context

- Staffing has been stable since the last inspection. The reading lead was appointed from within the school in January 2020.
- In the autumn term 2020, five class groups had to be educated remotely for periods of time. One Year 3 class had to work at home twice.
- At the time of the inspection, around one third of pupils were being educated on site, with all other pupils being educated at home. Two thirds of vulnerable pupils were being educated in school and just over a quarter of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending on site.

Main findings

- Leaders are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances. Remote education covers all subjects with some changes to the planned curriculum in music, and art and design. Online provision focuses on reading, writing and mathematics with one other subject taught each day. Staff are available to support families who have questions about subjects or access to devices. Leaders are checking which pupils are engaging with remote education.
- For pupils attending school, including those who are vulnerable, lessons continue in all subjects. The curriculum for these pupils covers the same subject content being taught to pupils learning remotely. Teaching assistants are on hand to provide extra help to pupils when they need it
- Prior to the pandemic, leaders restructured the teaching of phonics into a consistent approach. This is supported by decodable texts finely matched to pupils' knowledge of letter sounds. Leaders have continued to make reading a priority within their remote education offer. They have also looked at the order of learning in other subjects to make sure that pupils are always prepared for the next stage of learning. However, leaders now need to look at how well teachers use their knowledge of what pupils have learned to plan ahead.
- Staff have made regular contact with vulnerable pupils whose families did not wish to take up a place in school during the current restrictions. Leaders have provided families with helpful guidance on how to access remote education from a wide range of devices. They have also provided devices for families

without access. This means that these pupils are able to access the same learning materials as those who are in school.

- Most pupils with SEND are not attending school during the current partial lockdown. Leaders understand the reasons why some families have not taken up places when these have been offered. They have made sure that there is regular contact with families to give support and guidance as needed. Pupils whose needs cannot be fully met through online provision have been given additional learning resources to use at home.
- Governors understand what leaders have achieved so far and what they need to do next. They make sure that they receive the right information from school leaders. They make visits to the school and keep themselves informed about all aspects of its work. The multi-academy trust has supported leaders to bring about improvements in reading, as well as the sequencing of learning in other subjects.
- Leaders have drawn on subject expertise from schools in the same multi-academy trust to develop the curriculum in geography, history and science. These subjects are now planned to show the order in which concepts should be taught. Support and training from an English hub have helped leaders construct a coherent and consistent approach to the teaching of reading.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the principal, the executive principal and other leaders, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust and the chair of the local governing board to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at remote education materials, feedback to pupils and minutes of meetings. We heard pupils read. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We looked at 32 responses to staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of Aston Academy Community Education Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sheffield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bryony Freeman
Her Majesty's Inspector