

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



18 March 2021

Mrs Caroline Waugh  
Head of School  
Rye Hills Academy  
Redcar Lane  
Redcar  
North Yorkshire  
TS10 2HN

Dear Mrs Waugh

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Rye Hills Academy**

Following my remote inspection with Eleanor Belfield, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 24 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 have serious weaknesses.

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 have serious weaknesses 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:

- arrange intensive support for younger pupils who entered the school with weaker skills in reading, writing and/or mathematics. The catch-up support they should have received has been disrupted by the current national lockdown and the challenging circumstances you have faced. Leaders should ensure that these pupils get intensive support, particularly with reading, when they return to school on 8 March to help them catch up.

## **Context**

- Last year, the chair of the local governing body stepped down and the chair of trustees assumed the role. Another trustee was seconded onto the local governing body. There have been no changes to the senior leadership team. The school expects to leave the Nunthorpe Multi-Academy Trust at the end of May 2021 and join the North East Learning Trust.
- Across the autumn term 2020, around 70% of pupils had to be educated at home for at least a day due to COVID-19. Pupils in Year 10 spent more time at home than other year groups.
- At the time of this inspection, just over 90% of pupils were being educated at home. Nearly 50% of the school's vulnerable pupils and around 50% of pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan were attending school on site.
- At the time of this inspection a few members of staff were absent because of COVID-19.

## **Main findings**

- You and your leadership team have responded well to the challenges you have faced across the last 12 months. You took the necessary steps to build the infrastructure needed to provide remote education. You provided the training that your staff needed and have deployed your staff thoughtfully. Throughout the current circumstances, you have ensured pupils have received an education and that their welfare has been prioritised. Your staff feel they have been well led and managed during the pandemic.
- Following the last inspection, you continued to focus on reviewing and refining your curriculum planning. You received support from a partner school within the North East Learning Trust. You rightly focused on the subjects where examination results had been weaker. By September 2020, you had reworked curriculum plans so that the content was more ambitious, and knowledge was sequenced more effectively.
- In December 2020, you anticipated a national lockdown was likely. You worked with your subject leaders to look at how the spring term curriculum could be delivered remotely. You decided to stick with the planned topics

wherever possible. Some sensible and pragmatic changes were necessary in some subjects. For example, in mathematics, activities that needed specialist equipment were deferred, but teachers ensured important concepts were taught in the planned sequence. In history, teachers focused more on teaching key knowledge and less on historical skills. In discussion with your subject leaders, it was clear that they have planned to cover missed activities when all pupils return to school.

- Around 80 to 90 pupils are attending on site each day. They are being taught the same remote lessons as pupils who are learning from home. In addition, these pupils get an hour of physical education each day. Academic support and pastoral care are provided by teachers and support staff. Some pupils are receiving counselling support from an external provider. You are continuing to coordinate multi-agency support for pupils who have a social worker in a timely manner.
- On-site pupils who have an EHC plan are working in small groups. There are additional adults available to support them across the day. Teachers have had training in how to adapt lessons for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The pupils we spoke to told us they know how to use technology to ask their teacher for help, although sometimes they have to wait for a little time before teachers respond.
- The national lockdown has resulted in some of your younger pupils not getting the support they need to catch up in reading, writing and/or mathematics. The support they should get has been disrupted by the challenging circumstances you have faced. You are aware of this and have begun to think about how you address this once all pupils return to school.
- Some Year 11 pupils told us they are anxious about how their GCSE grades will be awarded. You told us that you are eager to communicate to them how this will be done, once government guidance becomes available.
- The trustees, acting through the local governing body, are providing effective support and challenge. They are checking on pupils' welfare, pupil attendance at remote lessons, online safety and staff workload. They are careful to check on the pressures you and other senior leaders are facing, especially as the school prepares to join a different multi-academy trust.
- You are pleased with the quality of external support you have received through the department for education's One Vision programme. This support has helped you to reshape curriculum thinking and to make changes to your pastoral care. You have also tightened up how you safeguard pupils and are now providing a much richer Life Skills curriculum to help pupils understand and manage risks they could encounter.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, the executive principal, pupils from key stages 3 and 4, curriculum leaders, a group of teachers and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. We also spoke to the chair of trustees and one other trustee.

We also met the school's designated safeguarding leader to discuss actions taken to strengthen safeguarding since the previous inspection. We looked at a written statement from a local authority representative and two letters from parents. We looked at the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We also reviewed 94 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the Nunthorpe Multi-Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Redcar and Cleveland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**