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19 March 2021

Aaron Meredith
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Dear Mr Meredith

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Tor Bridge Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Lydia Pride, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 5 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.

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 October 2018.

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:

- fine-tune the curriculum so that the essential knowledge that pupils need to understand in each subject is clearly defined, starting in the early years.

Context

- Since the previous section 8 monitoring inspection, there have been no significant changes to staffing. The school is currently working with a multi-academy trust as part of a management partnership agreement. The local authority and the local governing body retain responsibility for the school overall.
- Across the autumn term of 2020, approximately 10% of pupils were educated remotely at some point. Children in Reception were educated at home for 10 days when their 'bubble' closed.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately 30% of pupils are being educated on site. All vulnerable pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have been offered places at school. The majority of such pupils have taken up this offer.

Main findings

- Leaders have taken deliberate and purposeful action to provide pupils with education in the current circumstances. They have resolved to make the best of the situation by focusing carefully on what pupils should learn and when. They have continued to identify thoughtfully the principles on which the curriculum is based. Leaders' thinking is informed by the latest academic research, and they have adapted this well to fit the school's context.
- Leaders provide support and training to help subject leaders become independent leaders. While they show enthusiasm for their curriculum areas, subject leaders have not yet fully considered the important knowledge pupils need to learn in each subject. This means they are not clear about how best to support pupils to build on what they have learned, beginning in the early years.
- Leaders have reflected on their experience of providing education remotely, resulting in a refined approach so that pupils can learn better at home. At the same time, leaders recognise the benefits of pupils working with their peers. 'Virtual catch-ups' are regularly scheduled to motivate pupils and allow them some social interaction with their classmates. In addition, staff have kept the community feel of the school alive through activities such as the World Book Day assemblies and the forthcoming science week.
- Staff have been sensitive to the needs of their community and have worked closely with families and pupils to overcome difficulties. Pupils, whether

learning at home or at school, follow the same curriculum. Leaders have made adaptations to the curriculum to ensure a seamless transition when all pupils return to school.

- Over the last 18 months, leaders have put reading at the heart of the curriculum. Staff record 'bedtime stories' and are keen to extol the virtues of a good book. This encourages pupils to read regularly. Staff support younger pupils well to develop their understanding of phonics. Staff work closely with older pupils who have fallen behind in their reading. Many pupils have already caught up with their peers and now receive additional support to help them keep up.
- Pupils with SEND are supported well. Teachers have carefully considered how they can best support these pupils to remember the most important parts of the curriculum. Throughout the pandemic, leaders have continued to work extensively with specialist staff and external agencies to ensure that pupils' needs are met.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the work of the school, including the actions that leaders are taking to support pupils at this time. They share leaders' ambitions for pupils and the desire to restore parents' pride in the school. Governors have used their training to ask pertinent questions of leaders, who provide timely explanations of their actions. Morale is high because staff feel that governors and leaders take their well-being seriously.
- The trust has positively influenced the direction the school is taking and has also provided leadership capacity to support school improvement. Teachers develop their curriculum plans by working collaboratively with colleagues from their partner school. Leaders have worked equally successfully with other schools and with external consultants to develop their approach to early reading.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, governors, a representative of the local authority and the chair of the trust with whom the school is working as part of a management partnership agreement. We also spoke with staff and pupils. In these meetings we discussed leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also reviewed school policies and other documentation. We looked at pupils' work and sampled some teaching sessions that had been recorded. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 41 free-text responses, and 19 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 Plymouth. This letter will be

published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sarah McGinnis
Her Majesty's Inspector