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Daniel Hartley
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hartley

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Danesfield Church of England Middle School

Following my remote inspection with Sarah McGinnis, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 2 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 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 May 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:

- ensure the school's curriculum is sequenced effectively so that pupils know more and remember more.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, new chairs have been appointed to the trust board and also to the local governing body. An additional group of middle leaders have been appointed to monitor the quality of education in the school.
- Across the autumn term 2020, approximately 20% of pupils had to be educated remotely for short periods of time.
- At the time of the inspection, around 80% of pupils were being educated remotely. Of the vulnerable pupils, 20% attend on site, including 60% of pupils with education, health and care plans.

Main findings

- With the support of the multi-academy trust, you have made sure that pupils learn effectively from home. Your staff work tenaciously to ensure that pupils have working devices. Parents say that pupils benefit from more face-to-face time with their teachers. When pupils log in each day, they are greeted by their tutors. They attend live lessons across the week. As a result, pupils feel connected to the school and motivated towards their learning.
- You monitor the engagement of all pupils in remote learning carefully. When pupils do not participate, you act swiftly. Staff carry out home visits. If necessary, they encourage pupils to attend in person. Pupils working on site access their live lessons in the same way as if they were at home. Staff are on hand to provide any guidance they may need.
- Since the previous inspection, you have strengthened the leadership of the curriculum. Leaders have started to design a curriculum for Years 5 to 8. This builds on their first school learning and towards the local college curriculum. Links between subjects are being made. This work is further advanced in English and mathematics than in the wider curriculum.
- Leaders of all subjects have a strong grasp of the skills pupils should develop. However, in some subject areas, leaders do not have experience of setting out a sequence of knowledge for pupils to learn. Individual teachers decide

what to emphasise. Curriculum plans do not make clear what all pupils must learn. Consequently, pupils do not remember the important curriculum content well enough.

- You send a clear message to pupils about the importance of reading. Pupils are encouraged to keep electronic reading diaries. Pupils enjoy access to online books while they learn from home. This is especially useful for pupils who do not have many books of their own.
- A programme of phonics teaching for pupils in the early stages of learning to read is in place. Pupils who attend school in person have continued to learn phonics. However, pupils who learn from home have not benefited from this phonics development.
- Leaders provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff know the pupils well and understand their needs. For pupils learning from home, teachers offer a special online classroom. They present the most important content in smaller chunks, which helps pupils with SEND to remember more of the curriculum. When pupils with SEND attend in person, specialist staff support them well.
- The trust has sought feedback from pupils and parents on the remote learning offer. This has been used to improve the provision. Trust leaders invested in laptops for pupils. They are considering how to make the technology a routine feature of pupils' education.
- Trust leaders increased the number of leaders in the school following the previous inspection. As a result, leaders monitor more closely how the curriculum works in practice. The local governing body provides effective support and challenge to subject leaders, which they welcome. Subject leaders receive useful support from local literacy and mathematics hubs.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, the multi-academy trust chief executive officer and members of the local governing body to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We held meetings with middle leaders, including the SEND manager, and groups of teachers. We met with a small group of pupils to discuss their experiences of education in the current circumstances. We scrutinised curriculum plans and samples of pupils' work. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 29 free-text responses, and 26 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the West Somerset Academies multi-academy trust, the director of

education for the Diocese of Bath and Wells, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lydia Pride
Her Majesty's Inspector