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Joanne Clensy and Matthew Rayner
Co-Headteachers
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Dear Mrs Clensy and Dr Rayner

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of The Cherry Trees School

Following my remote inspection 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 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 September 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:

- ensure a suitable transition curriculum is in place, supporting both pupils and families, as pupils prepare to move on to their next school.

Context

- Since the last inspection, there have been many staff changes at the school, including significant changes in leadership. The school has benefited from the swift action taken by the local authority to appoint two experienced headteachers. Together, you lead the school jointly as co-headteachers.
- Pupil numbers have halved since the time of the previous inspection. Currently, all pupils registered with the school are in key stage 2.
- In September 2020, a period of consultation started regarding the proposed closure of the school in August 2021. A final decision will be made by Tower Hamlets local authority on 3 March this year.
- Across the autumn term 2020, most pupils had to be educated remotely.
- At the time of this inspection, just over half of the pupils were being educated on site. All pupils have education, health and care plans and are deemed vulnerable.

Main findings

- Leaders, governors and staff have thought carefully about how to provide education for all pupils in the current circumstances. You have helped pupils and parents and carers to overcome significant barriers to accessing education from home. For example, you have provided all pupils with a tablet computer to take part in lessons and engage with remote education. You have also provided pupils who are learning remotely with a wide range of practical equipment. Paper-based learning packs are also available for pupils.
- A suitable curriculum was not in place at the time of the last inspection. Since you took up your posts as co-headteachers in 2019, you and your staff have implemented a new curriculum. From the autumn term 2020, you have adapted this planned curriculum to meet current challenges effectively. Each morning, staff prioritise the development of literacy and mathematics. They provide individual support for those who need extra help to catch up.
- Leaders and staff have been vigilant in monitoring all pupils' access to learning, both on site and remotely. Leaders have re-organised staffing and allocated a remote learning teacher to support pupils who are learning from home. The remote learning teacher works closely with both class teachers on site. Staff plan and deliver remote education based on the school's planned curriculum. Each pupil has a timetable with links to live lessons and individual

additional support. Pupils are also given access to online resources and educational games.

- Your school specifically caters for pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Pupils learning on site are benefiting further from accessing more outdoor activities. These activities support pupils' emotional resilience and their understanding of the world around them.
- Reading has been a top priority for you and your staff. You are ensuring that pupils who are still in the early stages of learning to read benefit from regular phonics lessons. Reading catch-up sessions are in place and books are matched to pupils' reading ability. Teachers carefully choose books which capture the interests of their pupils. They read to pupils regularly, promoting the joy of reading and storytelling.
- Governors are holding you and your team to account for the new curriculum you provide. They hold regular discussions with senior leaders to review the education on offer. They are aware of the growing need to develop the curriculum offer further to provide support for both families and pupils. This is important as pupils prepare to move on to their next schools.
- The input from the local authority, in brokering key leadership appointments, has been highly valuable. Additionally, a leadership consultant, supports the school through half-termly review meetings. This support has had a positive impact on maintaining a focus on the curriculum during a time of uncertainty.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. I spoke to you, other leaders, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance and a representative of the local authority. These meetings were carried out to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

I also sampled parts of live lessons and scrutinised curriculum documentation and the most recent targeted intervention group minutes. I looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including two written responses, and 12 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 Tower Hamlets. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jean Thwaites
Her Majesty's Inspector