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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
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Philip Shackleton  
Headteacher  
Oldbury Academy  
Pound Road  
Oldbury  
West Midlands  
B68 8NE

Dear Mr Shackleton

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Oldbury Academy**

Following my remote inspection with Ann Pritchard, 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in December 2017.

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:

- provide more support to help pupils learning at home to improve their reading skills
- increase the proportion of pupils who attend all of their online lessons when learning at home
- further develop the governing body to make sure governors question school leaders' decisions sufficiently and provide appropriate challenge on the quality of remote education.

### **Context**

- The current headteacher, chair of trustees and vice-chair of trustees were in post at the time of the last section 5 inspection in 2017. The school is currently fully staffed.
- During the autumn term, approximately 75% of pupils had to be educated remotely for some time. All Year 10 pupils had to self-isolate for a total of 20 days. All Year 11 pupils had to self-isolate for a total of 16 days.
- At the time of the inspection, approximately 5% of pupils were attending school. Of those pupils identified as being vulnerable, 40% were in school. Of those pupils with an education, health and care plan, 75% were being educated in school. In total, approximately 25% of the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were in school.

### **Main findings**

- You and your staff are determined that pupils should receive an education at this current time. Leaders are taking effective action. They are ambitious in what they expect staff to deliver, and pupils to achieve. Staff have risen to the challenge, continually improving the quality of online lessons. This means pupils know and remember more of the planned curriculum.
- Pupils' learn through live online lessons, which follow their normal timetable. Leaders check pupils have the technology required so they can learn remotely. Staff have acted swiftly when this is not the case and have distributed over 400 laptops. Pastoral staff encourage pupils to attend school if they find learning at home difficult. Consequently, pupils have the resources and support to keep pace with their learning.
- Curriculum leaders have continued to improve the curriculum throughout the pandemic. They carefully consider the order of learning, ensuring that pupils' knowledge builds on what they already know. Teachers continue to follow these plans. In most subjects, pupils learn the same content as they would in normal times. Staff plan creatively to overcome practical problems. For

instance, they teach cookery lessons online and deliver art equipment to pupils' homes.

- Leaders regularly visit live lessons and view recordings. Staff welcome feedback on what is working well and what could be improved. Leaders encourage staff to attend and run training for others. Staff plan collaboratively, sharing ideas and resources readily. This means they are better equipped to help pupils learn remotely.
- Leaders check pupils' engagement in remote education. They know which pupils are attending. Pastoral leaders act on this information. However, there are some pupils who choose not to attend all lessons and a small number who attend few. This makes it difficult for teachers to plan learning. Leaders continue to support pupils and families to improve engagement. Leaders know that further work is needed so that these pupils do not fall further behind.
- Staff encourage parents of vulnerable pupils to send them to school, and many do. In response, you have increased the number of staff in school. This means that pupils' learning is supported well. Staff keep a watchful eye on the learning and well-being of vulnerable pupils learning at home. For instance, they visit pupils' homes to deliver resources.
- Leaders ensure that pupils in Year 11 are well-prepared for their 'next steps' after leaving school. Staff run additional lessons in all subjects to address gaps in pupils' learning. They share careers information and help pupils complete college applications. Staff know which pupils need further assistance. They have prioritised support for these pupils when school fully reopens.
- Staff deliver interventions to help pupils improve their reading. They are appropriately trained. This is helping pupils in school to make strong progress. This is not the case for pupils learning at home. Leaders provide a range of reading resources for pupils learning at home, but do not provide any staff input to help them improve their reading skills. This means pupils learning at home do not make as much progress in reading as their peers attending school.
- Staff work in partnership to support pupils with SEND, both in school and for those learning at home. For example, when learning remotely, pupils can join 'break out' groups with teaching assistants. Leaders have modified the curriculum and teachers adapt lessons to meet pupils' needs. Staff keep in close contact with pupils and families, providing support when needed. Consequently, pupils with SEND make progress and learn well.
- Governors are committed to the school. They understand the challenges staff and leaders face at this current time. They know the school well and recognise the strengths of the school's remote education. However, governors' understanding

lacks sharpness. This hinders them in providing the critical challenge leaders need to improve their actions. Leaders have worked with staff from a multi-academy trust to improve the school. Staff have welcomed this support and training. The support to develop the curriculum has been valuable. This has helped the school move forward on its improvement journey.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, senior, pastoral and subject leaders, teachers, the special educational needs coordinator, pupils, trustees and partners providing external support to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We reviewed curriculum plans, examples of materials used in live lessons and samples of pupils' work. In addition, we viewed recordings of live lessons. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 51 free-text responses, and 109 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sandwell. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ian Tustian  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**