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Liz Filer  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Filer

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Valentine Primary School**

Following my remote inspection with Catherine Old, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 4 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 March 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:

- strengthen the curriculum to include the explicit knowledge that pupils will learn in all subjects
- raise expectations of children's achievement in phonics by the end of the Reception Year so that children are better prepared for key stage 1.

### **Context**

- Since the previous inspection, an additional deputy headteacher has been appointed. Three new governors have joined the governing body.
- During the autumn term, most pupils attended school regularly. However, some pupils had to learn from home for short periods. Year 5 was disproportionately affected.
- At the time of this inspection, 83% of pupils were learning from home. Approximately 30% of pupils with education, health and care plans and 65% of the school's vulnerable pupils were attending school.
- A small number of staff have been unable to return to school as a result of COVID-19. Many staff have needed to self-isolate for short periods of time. Typically, staff absence is covered by other school staff, although leaders have sometimes used supply staff.

### **Main findings**

- Leaders acted promptly to ensure that pupils were able to continue their education during the pandemic. Since the previous lockdown, they have refined the school's remote learning offer. They have considered pupils' home circumstances and parents' views.
- Leaders have made sure that pupils learn a suitably broad curriculum. Recorded lessons, videos and activities help pupils at home to follow the school's planned curriculum. Leaders have ensured that pupils have the resources they need to study at home. This includes laptops to access the school's learning platform, upload work and receive feedback from teachers. Leaders have adapted some subjects to reflect the current circumstances. For example, in art, pupils have followed special projects and have had more opportunities to learn about other artists.
- Teachers provide timely feedback to pupils. The daily 'live' sessions help pupils at home to keep in touch with their teachers and peers. Effective systems are in place to check how well pupils are engaging with learning. Leaders keep close oversight of this and follow up any concerns. As a result of their efforts, levels of pupil engagement have increased.

- Before the pandemic, leaders had developed their curriculum plans. They made sure there was appropriate coverage of each subject in the national curriculum. In mathematics, leaders reviewed the content that pupils need to learn. They have recently adapted their plans to reflect gaps and weaknesses in pupils' learning. They have prioritised important knowledge such as number facts and key concepts. They have delayed the teaching of more complex mathematical content, like algebra, until pupils return to school. Their approach to this subject is well-thought-out. However, not all subjects are yet as well planned. In some subjects, such as history, leaders have not identified the precise knowledge that pupils need to learn.
- Leaders have ensured that reading has remained a priority. They have renewed the school's reading books for younger pupils. These now include the sounds that pupils know. Staff encourage parents to help their children develop a love of reading, for example, by reading and sharing books with their children at home. Pupils spoken to during the inspection were positive about reading and enjoyed the school's World Book Day.
- Phonics teaching has continued for younger pupils in school and at home during this lockdown. However, leaders have not set high enough expectations for children's phonics achievement by the end of the Reception Year. This means that children in the early years are not well prepared for learning in key stage 1.
- Throughout this period, leaders have prioritised pupils' well-being and safety. They keep a close check on vulnerable pupils, especially those who are not in school. Leaders have ensured that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the support that they need. Staff make regular calls and visits to check on pupils' welfare. Vulnerable pupils in school have benefited from being in smaller groups and receiving extra guidance from their teachers. This has supported well both their personal development and learning.
- Leaders have encouraged pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to attend school wherever possible. They work with staff and external specialists to ensure that these pupils continue to receive tailored support. Leaders have provided sensitive, thoughtful help to parents whose children continue to learn at home. They have well-judged plans to support pupils with SEND in returning to school.
- Governors have effective systems in place to monitor the education leaders provide, including remote education arrangements. Governors' work has helped to keep the spotlight on the achievement of all groups of pupils, particularly the most vulnerable. The local authority's challenge and support has helped the development of subject leadership and raised leaders' expectations for pupil achievement.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, subject leaders, leaders with responsibility for SEND, the family inclusion support officer, members of the governing body, including the chair, and two representatives of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We met with two groups of pupils and looked at recorded lessons and curriculum plans from the school's remote learning platform. We also reviewed a range of school documents including the school's staff survey, parent survey and action plan, as well as information about the school's curriculum and remote learning offer. We considered 69 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 58 written responses, and 62 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Cox  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**