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24 March 2021

Laurie Cornwell
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Dear Miss Cornwell

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Unified Academy

Following my inspection with Shazia Akram, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 2 and 3 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, most of Ofsted's monitoring inspections are being carried out remotely. This inspection, however, began on-site at 15 minutes notice due to significant concerns about safeguarding. Inspection activities on the second day were carried out remotely.

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 April 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 not taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.

Safeguarding is not effective.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- urgently address the safety of the site
- ensure that all pupils are kept safe by rigorously monitoring that records relating to the safety and well-being of pupils are kept systematically and that concerns are followed up fully in a systematic and timely manner
- ensure that all pupils who should be in school are and that learning for any pupils who have to work remotely is ambitious and supports them to make progress across the curriculum.

Context

- Unified Academy, previously Chart Wood School, is a special school for boys who have social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties. All pupils have education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- There have been many staffing changes, including at leadership level, since the last monitoring inspection in March 2020. The role of principal is currently filled by the deputy chief executive officer of the Orchard Hill College Academy Trust (OHCAT). A new principal has been appointed to start in April 2021. A new chair of the local governing body joined in January 2021.
- In the autumn term 2020, approximately a third of pupils were educated remotely for short periods of time.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately two thirds of pupils were not in school.
- Just over a third of staff are currently absent due to COVID-19. Those who are well enough are working from home. Leaders have employed agency staff to provide cover.

Main findings

- Leaders have failed to ensure that all pupils receive an education during the current period of national restrictions. Too few pupils who would benefit from being in school are learning on site. Those who are working from home receive worksheets for a limited range of subjects. The work these pupils are set does not take into account their literacy needs or what they need to learn. Many tasks are time-filling activities rather than education that will help them to make progress across the curriculum and with their EHC plan targets. Leaders have not checked to make sure that what is being set by teachers matches their intentions for the curriculum.
- Pupils attending the school site gain from working in smaller groups than usual. Teachers mostly match activities to pupils' individual needs and take

account of their academic and EHC plan targets. Leaders have recently implemented a structured reading programme. Staff work well with pupils who are on site to help them to practise their reading strategies and to learn to read. They frequently make use of therapy dogs to support this work. Pupils who are working from home have not had similar support to improve their reading. They have use of an online library, but not all staff have checked that they are reading as often as they should.

- There are some pupils not in school who benefit from bespoke timetables, where they spend some time with external specialist providers and the rest of their week completing linked online learning. This is particularly the case for some Year 11 pupils who staff are working with, to help them to develop the knowledge and skills to move to their preferred post-16 option.
- Pupils' EHC plan reviews include discussion about each pupil's future aspirations and interests. However, important routine work to provide careers education, information, advice and guidance paused in March 2020 and has not been fully resumed. Leaders recognise that this is an essential part of the curriculum and plan to start it again before Easter.
- OHCAT trustees and members of the local governing body are well aware of the need for rapid improvement at the school. They have deployed senior trust personnel to work at the school and to make the required changes. Governors instigated a review of restrictive physical intervention (RPI). As a consequence of this challenge, all staff have been re-trained and are supported to use well-regarded de-escalation techniques. Use of RPI has fallen and staff now feel confident to de-escalate an incident.
- An external behaviour specialist has provided essential staff training and support with de-escalation techniques. The work of external consultants who are helping to redesign the curriculum is in its infancy and it is too soon to see its impact. OHCAT and school leaders recognise the importance of a well-trained staff group and are providing coaching for individual staff, especially those working towards teaching qualifications.
- Safeguarding remains ineffective. Leaders have provided extensive training for staff, but there is not yet a culture of safeguarding where staff understand it is everyone's responsibility to keep pupils safe. Leaders have not acted promptly to repair damage to the newly refurbished school building and so pupils are not safe. Leaders have confirmed to inspectors that they are taking immediate action on issues we pointed out, including damaged electrical sockets and missing fire extinguishers. These issues would have been seen by many adults at the school, all of whom should have instigated urgent action but did not.
- Record-keeping remains an issue. There are still multiple reporting systems in use, which create confusion and, therefore, risk. For example, there are

different systems to log telephone calls to check on pupils currently working at home. Leaders have not systematically monitored this and, therefore, do not know that these calls have been made or if pupils are safe. They did not know how to access information about pupils' attendance and well-being, suggesting that this is not something that they routinely consider.

- Staff are recording more concerns in the new online reporting system. However, leaders are not recording all of their follow-up actions and interactions with pupils, their families and external professionals. Leaders cannot show that required safeguarding actions are taken in a timely and appropriate fashion. They cannot demonstrate what they have done to help keep pupils safe.

Evidence

Day 1 of this inspection was conducted on site due to concerns about safeguarding. We held remote meetings on day 2 to explore leaders' actions to provide education in the current circumstances.

We spoke to you, other senior leaders including the associate leader from OHCAT who is supporting you on site, the chief executive officer (CEO), pupils attending the school site, staff and representatives of those responsible for governance to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown and the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures.

We scrutinised a wide range of documentation relating to safeguarding, including records of employment checks and about pupil safety and attendance. We toured the school site. We also examined curriculum plans and the work provided to pupils who are learning remotely. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Parent View, or the online staff survey.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the CEO of Orchard Hill College Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lucy English
Her Majesty's Inspector