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24 March 2021

Amanda Harrison  
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Dear Mrs Harrison

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

Following my remote inspection with Alison Bradley, 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 January 2018.

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:

- develop the curriculum across all subjects, ensuring knowledge is coherently sequenced from early years through to Year 6
- ensure all staff receive high-quality and up-to-date training to teach pupils to read.

## **Context**

- Following four terms of interim leadership arrangements, the new headteacher and deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2020. A special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) was appointed internally and took up post in January 2021. The governing body reconstituted in May 2020. This is the first school year with three classes in all year groups.
- The whole school had to close for the final week of the autumn term 2020 due to COVID-19. In addition, all of Year 6 and five classes in other year groups had to self-isolate for two weeks at some point.
- Approximately a fifth of pupils were being educated onsite at the time of this inspection. All vulnerable pupils and nearly three quarters of pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan were attending school.

## **Main findings**

- Leaders and governors have set clear expectations that all pupils continue with their education at this time. They are adapting how pupils can do this. Most are learning on the school's digital platform. If this proves tricky, leaders signpost them to alternative online activities or offer paper packs. Where possible, teachers set the same work for pupils in school and at home. As a result of leaders' efforts, most pupils are participating in learning linked to the usual curriculum.
- Leaders have started again designing a new school curriculum to provide a better education than before. They understand there is still much work to do. Currently, some subject plans are further forward than others. An example of this is in science where leaders have mapped out what they want pupils to know and be able to do. In other subjects, leaders have started to order knowledge from Year 1 to Year 6. This work is still at an early stage and the curriculum in early years is not yet part of it. Leaders know they need to begin each subject's content from when a child starts school.
- There is a commitment among leaders and staff that all pupils will learn to read. However, many staff have not received up-to-date training, so leaders cannot be sure that teaching is consistently high quality or that decisions about adapting the phonics programme are sensible.

- Despite the need for more training, leaders are ensuring that pupils continue with their reading lessons, whether they are learning in school or at home. Pupils in early years and key stage 1 who need extra support with their phonics are in school. For those at home, staff are continuing to teach pupils in their usual groups. Leaders have invested in online books for pupils across the school. For those who may not be able to access them or do not have enough books at home, leaders make sure they can borrow books safely from school.
- Much consideration has gone into supporting vulnerable pupils. Leaders are resolute in getting these pupils into school. This is proving successful. These pupils are receiving direct teaching and additional support in smaller class sizes.
- Leaders are proud of Northgate's inclusive ethos. They are determined to continue to provide an appropriate education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in the current circumstances. They have worked with parents to get pupils with an EHC plan into school. This is enabling individual needs to be met. For pupils who may have to stay at home, leaders have planned a bespoke timetable of professional services. Other pupils with SEND come into school for their one-to-one sessions or access support at home through video links.
- Governance has strengthened. New members who have recently joined are providing challenge and support. Leaders keep the governing body informed about what they are doing to improve the school. Governors are insightful with their questions for leaders, assuring themselves that pupils are receiving an education in school or at home. At the same time, they are keeping a close eye on staff's well-being.
- External partners are training and coaching leaders and governors. This is helping leaders to identify the next steps to take. The local authority has supported governors in showing greater impact. Governors' actions show they are thinking more strategically. Subject leaders are more confident in monitoring the quality of education and seeing the difference this is making for pupils.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, subject leaders, pupils, the chair of governors and other members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also viewed samples of pupils' work. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 22 free-text responses, and 77 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 West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Broadbridge  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**