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Tony Fitzpatrick
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Dear Mr Fitzpatrick

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Barnwell School

Following my remote inspection with Isabel Davis, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), 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 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 at its previous section 5 inspections. 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:

- review the curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), using the information you have collected during this time of remote education.

Context

- Since the previous full inspection in January 2018, the leadership structure has changed. The headteacher is now the executive headteacher and one of the previous deputy headteachers is head of school. An assistant headteacher is currently the interim head of science.
- In the first half of the autumn term 2020, very few pupils had to learn from home. By the second half of the same term, the school experienced greater disruption, with pupils isolating at home. During this period, the whole of Year 9 and Year 11 and some classes in Year 8 had to learn from home. In total, around 40% of pupils had to isolate at any one time.
- Most pupils are learning from home, with approximately 10% of pupils on site. Around 25% of vulnerable pupils and 60% of pupils with education, health and care plans are being supported in school.

Main findings

- Following the previous inspection, leaders reviewed the curriculum for all subjects. Leaders were well placed to move to remote education during the national lockdowns. They continued to develop remote education during the autumn term of 2020 and spring term of 2021. Leaders are ensuring they provide an education to pupils learning in school or at home in the current circumstances.
- Leaders have adapted how they teach each subject so pupils can access their learning remotely. Teachers increasingly deliver 'live' lessons that closely match pupils' original timetables. Apart from physical education and the school's 'PRIDE' programme, most pupils access the same subjects as they once did. Teachers check how well pupils are doing and provide guidance and feedback to help pupils understand what they are learning. Pupils told us that they value the discussions with their teachers. Pupils comment upon how the guidance teachers provide supports pupils to improve.
- Teachers and leaders monitor pupils' attendance and participation in remote education. Leaders have developed processes for quickly contacting parents should staff have concerns about a pupil and their learning. Regular contact with parents has helped leaders understand the challenges of their families at this time. Staff provide support at home where necessary. Some phone calls have resulted in leaders providing additional work packs or supporting pupils

to return to school to work. Pupils, parents and staff say that leaders are looking after their well-being at this time.

- In Year 11 and Year 13, leaders have matched the remote curriculum to the pupils' usual experience in school. The curriculum supports reading to continue both in class and at home. Where possible, leaders have ensured that those in the sixth form continue to access other opportunities such as public-speaking opportunities and externally arranged leadership opportunities.
- Leaders have provided staff with appropriate training to deliver the school's curriculum remotely. Staff feel they are supported well, and they value the opportunities leaders give them to share ideas to improve their remote teaching further.
- For those working at school, and those learning at home, the content of the curriculum is mostly the same. Teachers and staff in school consider different ways to ensure the most vulnerable pupils receive the help they need. For example, leaders have supported the weakest readers with access to online reading resources and e-books.
- Leaders use what they know about pupils with SEND to help them access the curriculum. As a result, teachers work closely with learning support assistants to give pupils with SEND the support they need. Pupils with SEND and their parents tell us that they appreciate the additional help that they have been given during the period of remote learning.
- A small number of pupils with SEND are studying a smaller range of subjects than they would usually. This group of pupils are accessing a curriculum that focuses on developing their English, mathematics and science knowledge, with additional reading and other support tailored to their needs. Leaders and governors recognise this is a short-term solution and are making plans to help return these pupils to their usual curriculum when possible.
- Governors are supporting leaders to take effective action. They ask leaders appropriate questions about how leaders are supporting pupils' learning in the current circumstances. Governors consider staff and pupils' well-being.
- The local authority challenges and supports leaders to help them continually review the curriculum.

Evidence

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

We also reviewed minutes from previous governing body meetings. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 48 free-text responses, and 98 staff responses to Ofsted's 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 Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Damian Loneragan
Her Majesty's Inspector