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17 March 2021

Troy Jenkinson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Jenkinson

Additional monitoring inspection of Highgate Community Primary School

Following my inspection with Damien Turrell, 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 have serious weaknesses.

Inspectors visited the school site due to significant concerns about safeguarding raised at the previous inspection. The range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would normally be the case. As a result, this letter provides a more limited level of assurance than our usual monitoring reports.

The inspection took place because the school was judged to have serious weaknesses at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in September 2019.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) 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.

Safeguarding is effective.

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

- refine existing curriculum plans so that teachers can identify the knowledge that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), need to learn so that they achieve well in the foundation subjects
- raise the ambition of the phonics programme in the early years so that children are better prepared for the demands of reading in Year 1.

Context

- The early years leader joined the school in September 2020. The governing body appointed a new chair of governors in June 2020.
- The school is due to become part of the Bradgate Education Partnership multi-academy trust on 1 April 2021.
- A small number of pupils had to learn from home at some point during the autumn term 2020. Pupils in Year 2 had to do this more than others.
- Currently, around half of all pupils are learning from home. Almost all pupils with SEND, or those who are vulnerable, are attending on site.
- The deputy headteacher, key stage 1 leader and English leader are currently absent from work. These roles are covered temporarily by the headteacher and other staff.

Main findings

- Leaders give careful thought to how pupils receive education in the current circumstances. They make sure that pupils learning from home get the same curriculum as those in school. They know which pupils need more support to do this. These pupils receive electronic devices and paper packs of resources. Staff contact pupils regularly to check that they understand the content taught. Parents and carers appreciate this help. A typical comment was that, 'The school has gone above and beyond during this last lockdown.'
- Leaders have worked determinedly to develop the curriculum since the previous inspection. They have set out what they want pupils to know and remember in most subjects, starting from the early years. This work is further along in some subjects than in others. In some foundation subjects, leaders have not identified precisely enough the knowledge that pupils, including those with SEND, need to understand so that they achieve well.
- Leaders use research to improve the curriculum. For example, they train staff to understand how information is stored and remembered in pupils' memory. Pupils at home and in school take part in 'fab four' and 'super six' quizzes so that teachers can check what pupils have remembered. Children in the early

years get 'pinny time'. On these occasions, staff dress in pinafores with letter cards in the pockets. They join in with children's play, pulling out letter cards to check that children can remember the sounds that the letters make.

- Leaders act on feedback from parents to improve the remote education on offer. This has led to pupils now receiving more face-to-face time with teachers than they did during the first national lockdown. For example, staff deliver daily registration sessions and weekly assemblies online.
- Leaders and teachers adapt the curriculum so that all pupils can continue to learn, whether in school or at home. For example, teachers currently deliver more theoretical parts of practical subjects such as design and technology. Plans are in place to teach practical content when pupils return to school. In the early years, teachers encourage children to use everyday household items to learn. Children make 'counting boxes' filled with 20 items so they can practise counting. They go on hunts around the home to find different household objects, such as tins and boxes, that fit the description of the three-dimensional shapes they are learning about.
- Leaders are improving the reading curriculum. Most pupils read books that are well matched to the phonic knowledge they have. Pupils at home access electronic texts. Pupils who fall behind get extra help to catch up. However, the phonics programme in the early years is not ambitious enough. Some children leave the Reception Year without the knowledge they need to be fluent readers in Year 1.
- Leaders work hard to support vulnerable families. They check regularly how well families of these pupils are coping in the current circumstances. They offer vulnerable pupils places in school when learning at home becomes too difficult. Many of these pupils take part in forest activities. Staff use this time to improve pupils' confidence, self-esteem and well-being.
- Leaders adapt the curriculum for pupils with SEND who are learning at home or at school. For example, staff teach these pupils important vocabulary before the start of lessons. Pupils use this knowledge to help them understand lesson content. Staff in 'The Hub' provide effective care and support for those pupils with the most complex needs.
- Governors are committed to improving the school. They are reflective and keen to learn from mistakes made in the past. They work hard to check that leaders do the right things for all pupils. They receive a wide range of information from leaders and other stakeholders. They use this to deepen their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The local authority and the incoming trust provide valuable support to the school. Together, they have an accurate view of the school's current performance. They give effective training to governors to improve their

knowledge of safeguarding. They support leaders to develop weaker areas of the curriculum.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have acted quickly to remedy weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Staff receive comprehensive training. They know what to do when a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders respond to these concerns and make sure that pupils get the help they need. Leaders record the actions they take to keep pupils safe. These records are detailed and accurate. Pupils told us that, 'If you are feeling upset or stuck, and your head is down, staff will come and help you.'

Evidence

We spoke to you, the assistant headteacher, the early years leader, the school business manager, the special educational needs coordinator, the deputy designated leads for safeguarding, two subject leaders, a small group of Years 5 and 6 pupils, three members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the chief executive officer of the Bradgate Education Partnership multi-academy trust to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We scrutinised a wide range of documents relating to safeguarding. We checked a sample of lesson materials used for remote education and listened to pupils in Years 1 to 3 read. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 41 free-text responses, and 17 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 Leicestershire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Varnam
Her Majesty's Inspector