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Karen Smyth
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Dear Ms Smyth

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School

Following my remote inspection with Sue Eastwood, 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. 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:

- implement all aspects of the revised curriculum in those subjects that are at an earlier stage of development.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, 15 staff have left the school and 15 staff have joined the school. New subject leaders of computing, music, science and religious education have been appointed. A special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has also taken up post. A new chair of the governing body has been appointed.
- During autumn term 2020, a small number of pupils were educated remotely for short periods of time. Most of these pupils were in Year 11.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately nine out of 10 pupils were being educated at home.
- About a third of pupils who are identified as vulnerable are being educated on site. Approximately three out of 10 pupils with an education, health and care plan are being educated at school.

Main findings

- You have ensured that pupils follow their usual curriculum either on site or remotely, despite the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions. Staff feel well supported with the training they receive on remote education. Parents and carers are very positive about the communication that they receive from staff during these challenging times. You and the staff have worked together to ensure that education is available to all pupils.
- Before the pandemic, subject leaders had carefully reviewed the curriculum. This worked to an improvement in curriculum planning in many subjects, including history and mathematics. Most curriculum plans now identify what pupils will learn. The curriculum on offer to students in the sixth form has also been strengthened by the introduction of a broader range of vocational subjects. Despite the improvements in some curriculum areas, there remains work to do to improve the delivery of the curriculum in some subjects.
- Subject leaders and teachers have adapted the current curriculum appropriately so that pupils are able to learn whether they are at home or in school. For example, in science, pupils can observe simulations of practical work. In mathematics, some topics, such as circle theorems, vectors and transformations that require pupils to visualise concepts, will be taught when pupils return to school.

- Pupils who attend school each day receive the same curriculum as those pupils who are studying at home. They profit from close support from teachers and support staff. Those pupils who work from home access the curriculum through 'live' lessons. Teachers have developed effective strategies to check on how well pupils are learning. Pupils receive useful feedback that helps them to improve their work. The personal, social, health and education programme is helping to support pupils' mental health.
- Pastoral staff make regular contact with vulnerable pupils who are learning at home. This is helping to address any challenges that pupils may have with remote education. Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive extra support if they need it.
- You have prioritised reading. Pupils are provided with challenging and interesting books to read. Younger pupils who struggle to read are supported well to help them develop their phonic knowledge and improve their reading fluency.
- Pupils in Year 11 and students in Year 13 follow their usual range of examination subjects. Leaders provide Year 11 pupils with virtual work experience to support their next steps. Pupils in Year 13 receive helpful careers guidance and support with applications to university.
- You are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers use information well to ensure that these pupils can access the curriculum. Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND are provided with electronic devices so that they can work from home. Teaching assistants provide effective support, both on site and to those pupils who are working remotely.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the education that pupils are receiving. This is because they continue to meet with you and other leaders despite the current challenging circumstances. Governors provide a strong level of support and challenge to senior and middle leaders, particularly in relation to the curriculum and remote education. You, along with governors, have ensured that staff workload and well-being are carefully considered.
- Two school improvement partners work closely with you and other leaders in the school. This is helping to develop the skills of subject leaders in leading their areas and improve curriculum planning and delivery.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with you, other senior leaders, subject leaders, the SENCo, staff, pupils, three members of the governing body, the local authority's appointed school improvement partner and a representative of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. This was to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also carried out a review of the curriculum that pupils are receiving. This included the arrangements for delivering the curriculum remotely. We examined a range of documentation, including curriculum plans and three emails that parents have shared with Ofsted. We also analysed 107 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 106 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector