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Ian Barton
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Dear Mr Barton

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Ashingdon Primary Academy

Following my remote inspection with Maureen Su, 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 October 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 taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.

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

- continue to ensure and check that reading is taught effectively across the school so that all pupils become confident and successful readers
- provide subject-specific training so that staff are confident to teach all aspects of the school's curriculum, and teachers plan and deliver tasks that help pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding across all curriculum subjects.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed.
- During the autumn term 2020, approximately three fifths of pupils had to be educated remotely. This mainly affected pupils in Year 1, Year 4, Year 5, and Year 6.
- At the time of this inspection three quarters of pupils were being educated at home and one quarter of pupils were being educated on site. Approximately half of all vulnerable pupils were attending school. Half of the pupils with education, health and care plans were attending school for on-site education.

Main findings

- You are taking effective action to provide education for pupils in the current circumstances. You ensure that teachers plan learning across a range of subjects, as well as the daily sessions in English and mathematics. Teachers and support staff are available throughout the school day. They give feedback on pupils' work and support pupils who may need additional help.
- Pupils who are learning at home begin the day with a 'live' class session. Teachers go through the work for the day and use this opportunity to check on pupils' well-being. Parents appreciate the structure this gives to learning at home. Pupils' engagement in remote learning is high across all year groups.
- Pupils who are attending school say they enjoy learning in smaller groups. They are taking part in the same lessons as pupils who are learning remotely. In addition, leaders are trying hard to maintain the school's usual routines so that pupils regularly see their teachers and their peers. For example, pupils have weekly celebration assemblies and regular video messages.
- Before the start of the pandemic, leaders had been developing the school's curriculum. They have plotted what pupils need to learn across all subjects from early years to Year 6. Teachers have been using the curriculum plans as the basis for the remote education offer. Teachers have not had all the training they need to enable them to fully develop their teaching approaches across all curriculum subjects.

- Pupils continue to receive a broad curriculum. Leaders have identified aspects of the curriculum that are more difficult to teach remotely, such as practical aspects of science and physical education. When pupils return fully to school, leaders are planning to give more time to these subjects so pupils are taught any content they have missed.
- Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils take part in daily phonics lessons, whether they are learning in school or at home. Teachers have created phonics videos to help pupils pronounce their sounds correctly. This is also helping parents support pupils with phonics practice at home.
- Leaders have worked with support from the trust to improve the teaching of phonics and reading across the school. Leaders know that reading needs to continue to be a priority for the school. Leaders are focused on ensuring that pupils have the support they need to become confident readers.
- Leaders take care to ensure that vulnerable pupils are well supported. Staff are mindful of pupils' welfare. Regular contact between school and home helps staff ensure that pupils are provided with any additional help and resources they may need. Where leaders have concerns, they act swiftly to ensure that pupils and families are given appropriate support.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have access to the support they need, whether they are learning in school or at home. Staff adapt lesson resources so that pupils with SEND can be successful in their learning. Staff work closely with parents to find ways to help motivate and encourage pupils while they are learning at home.
- Throughout the pandemic, governors have continued to work closely with the school and have maintained their regular visits. They are well informed and continue to hold leaders to account for the education they are providing in the current circumstances. Governors have spoken with pupils about their work and they have kept a close eye on how well leaders are ensuring that all pupils, including the most vulnerable, are safeguarded.
- Leaders appreciate the extra support which the trust has provided throughout the pandemic. The trust has ensured that all pupils have access to the technology and resources they need to take part in remote learning. The trust is working with the governing body to support the appointment of a new headteacher for September.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, to other senior leaders, and your Reception class teacher, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. We met with the chair of the governing body and a representative of the trust. We spoke with pupils.

We also carried out a scrutiny of the online lesson plans and resources that teachers are providing for pupils who are learning remotely. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 51 free-text responses, and 34 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Academies Enterprise Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Katherine Douglas
Her Majesty's Inspector