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Kelly O'Connor
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Dear Mrs O'Connor

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Alfred Street Junior School

Following my remote inspection with Shaheen Hussain, Seconded Inspector, of your school on 2 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.

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 four successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in December 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.

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

- urgently support pupils who have not participated with phonics interventions, to prevent them from falling further behind and to close gaps in learning.

Context

- Since the last inspection, the school's leader for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has left the school. A teacher and some support staff have also left. Several members of the governing body are relatively new to their roles.
- During the autumn term, approximately a third of pupils were required to self-isolate at home.
- Currently, a third of all pupils are in school. This includes half of the school's pupils with SEND, and nearly all the vulnerable pupils.

Main findings

- Leaders have made sure all pupils have access to education during the current lockdown. They have checked which pupils are taking part in learning. Leaders have given laptops to pupils who were struggling to access learning or have offered them a place in school. Now almost all pupils are taking part.
- Before the pandemic, leaders were well underway with developing the curriculum. They have planned out what they want pupils to know in each of the subjects. They are now sequencing subject-specific knowledge, so it builds as pupils move through the school.
- Teachers are using the school's usual curriculum to plan learning. Some parts of the curriculum are more difficult to cover at home. Not all pupils have suitable resources. When all pupils return to school, teachers will revisit art, design and technology and science content that they have not been able to cover in enough depth.
- Leaders have made sure that most of the vulnerable pupils are working in school. The support these pupils would usually get has been able to continue. For example, nurture provision for pupil's social and emotional needs has carried on. The pupils at home who would usually attend join in virtually.
- Teachers deliver live lessons to pupils at home and in school at the same time. Pupils at home who need extra help have individual lessons with support staff or their teacher. Staff help pupils in school during lessons if they need it. All pupils have a pack of resources to help them with their learning.
- Some pupils are still at an early stage of reading. Leaders have introduced a new approach to teaching phonics. The pandemic and staff changes have

hindered the roll out of this programme. Leaders have not monitored well enough the support that early readers are getting. This is particularly the case for those pupils who are learning at home. The gap between these pupils and their peers is growing. They need urgent support to help them catch up.

- Leaders are working with staff to show them how they can support pupils with SEND. Teachers are beginning to set realistic targets for these pupils. Leaders are checking that teachers plan for the needs of pupils with SEND in whole-class learning. Some pupils with SEND who are learning at home are following a different timetable to their class. They can watch and pause lessons to help them work through learning at their own pace. Staff keep in daily contact with these pupils to check that they understand what they have covered.
- The governing body are developing their role. They are beginning to ask questions about what is happening in school. For example, they have asked subject leaders how pandemic restrictions have affected their subjects. Governors need to be more rigorous in checking what leaders are telling them, and not rely on what they are being told.
- The local authority has provided support for middle and senior leaders. This is helping these leaders to better understand what they need to do in their roles. Staff are receiving support to implement the early reading programme.

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 looked at examples of remote lessons, observed pupils reading with a familiar adult and reviewed documents relating to the school's curriculum planning. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 12 free-text responses, and 22 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 Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helen Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector