

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
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Angela Smith  
Principal  
The Ferrers School  
Queensway  
Higham Ferrers  
Rushden  
Northamptonshire  
NN10 8LF

Dear Mrs Smith

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of The Ferrers School**

Following my remote inspection with Peter Stonier, 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 require special measures.

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 was judged to require special measures at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in May 2018.

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 ensure that:

- teachers consistently check that pupils' understanding of important knowledge is secure before introducing more complex tasks.

## **Context**

- A new special educational needs (SENCo) started at the school in September 2020, along with four new teaching assistants. A new curriculum leader for design, technology and art joined the school at the start of the spring term. Leaders have also appointed a new curriculum leader for business studies and information and communication technology and a senior tutor. Two governors have recently joined the local governing body.
- Across the autumn term in 2020, the vast majority of pupils were educated in school. Around one quarter of pupils were required to isolate due to COVID-19. Years 10 and 11 were the most affected year groups.
- At the time of this inspection, most pupils were being educated at home. Around one quarter of all vulnerable pupils were attending school. Similarly, around a quarter of all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending school, including half of all pupils with education, health and care plans.

## **Main findings**

- Leaders show an unwavering commitment to school improvement, despite the demands of the current lockdown. They have anticipated the needs of pupils and staff. Staff morale is high and they are proud to work at the school. Pupils recognise the improvements made. As one pupil said: 'The school is definitely improving rapidly since I joined in Year 7. The teachers are now more focused on what we are capable of learning.'
- Subject leaders have comprehensively redeveloped their subject plans, including for courses in the sixth form. Their ambitious plans precisely identify what pupils need to know in a thoughtfully sequenced way. They consider what pupils have already learned and what comes next.
- Leaders have reorganised some aspects of the curriculum because of COVID-19. In practical subjects such as physical education and music, pupils are focusing on theoretical aspects. Leaders have considered the views of pupils regarding their learning in personal, social, health and economic education. The programme includes their involvement, throughout the lockdown, in the school's 'pledge' programme. This programme enables pupils to get involved in leadership, charity work and service and improves their understanding of diversity, for example. Leaders' curriculum planning shows that subjects are well placed to get back on track quickly in the future.

- Leaders are ensuring that pupils' remote learning matches their usual range of subjects. They have ensured that all pupils, including those who are vulnerable and the children of key workers, are receiving the same education. Teachers plan learning using appropriate resources to stimulate pupils' interest and engagement. However, sometimes they move on to more complex tasks before checking that all pupils have fully understood what has been taught.
- Leaders stringently check pupils' engagement with the curriculum. Staff make regular phone calls and sometimes 'doorstep' visits to individual pupils. These include the minority of pupils who are less well motivated. Leaders' checks have helped to improve pupils' engagement with the remote curriculum.
- Leaders' improvements to the curriculum include a renewed focus on reading. The school's librarian is leading several schemes to promote a love of reading across the school, including a 'Book Buzz' scheme to provide a free reading book for all pupils in Year 7. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read are supported with extra guided reading sessions and one-to-one support.
- Leaders have planned further assessments for pupils in Years 11 and 13 before the end of the school year. They have approached this in a sensitive way. Extra sessions are supporting pupils who need more help, including those who are vulnerable. Leaders are ensuring that all pupils in Years 11 and 13 are being prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.
- Leaders' provision for pupils with SEND has been comprehensively restructured. The new SENCo has been instrumental in rebuilding trust with parents. Leaders have developed effective strategies to support pupils with SEND, including home visits and providing extra help and resources where necessary.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the improvements taking place at the school. Relationships with leaders are positive and constructive. The 'academy champions' strategy ensures that governors play a role in decision-making. They have supported leaders in checking pupils' levels of engagement and their safety and well-being.
- The trust continues to provide effective support to the school. This includes hands-on curriculum support to help subject leaders in planning and checking the quality of education in their areas. The trust is investing in updated classroom technology and the school environment. Leaders at the school are providing support to other secondary schools within the trust.
- Leaders and staff are strengthening the reputation of the school in the local area. Most parents hold positive views about the school and the large majority

would recommend it. One parent, typical of many, said: 'The school has really embraced online learning and have tried to provide the best education possible in what are very difficult times for everyone.'

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, the SENCo and three subject leaders. Meetings were held with three members of the local governing body, including the chair, and the chief executive officer of the Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. We also spoke with a small group of pupils attending on the school site.

We also reviewed several school policies, including those relating to SEND, the curriculum and remote education. We checked a sample of recorded lessons and pupils' work. We examined a selection of minutes from the meetings of the local governing body. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 32 free-text responses, and 87 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 Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Stevens  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**