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Valerie Rose
Principal
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Dear Mrs Rose

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Ravens Academy

Following my remote inspection with Marc White, Her Majesty's Inspector, 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 special measures.

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 was judged to require special measures at its previous section 5 inspection. 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:

- develop further the recent improvements made to the curriculum
- provide training for staff to improve their knowledge and understanding of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) so that the identification of pupils' needs is accurate, and these pupils learn well.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, a new executive principal was appointed in January 2020. You became principal in September 2020. A new senior vice-principal, a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and four teachers have joined the school. A new chair and vice-chair of governors lead a new governing body.
- All pupils experienced remote education when the school was closed for two weeks in the autumn term. Year 4 pupils had to isolate on two separate occasions.
- At the time of this inspection, the vast majority of pupils were being educated at home. Over half of the identified vulnerable pupils attend the school site at least once a week. About a quarter of all pupils with SEND are attending school.

Main findings

- Teachers are of the view that remote education has come on in 'leaps and bounds' since the start of the pandemic because you and other leaders have 'taken immediate action at every stage'. This is also the view of several parents who responded to the Ofsted Parent View. You and your leadership team have made sure that pupils continue to receive education during the current circumstances.
- Following the previous inspection, the trust and the executive principal supported you and your leaders to develop the school's curriculum. They have also supported your actions to tackle previous weaknesses in reading, the teaching of phonics, and mathematics. Since September 2020, you have focused on developing the wider curriculum. This includes tailoring the curriculum to reflect pupils' current experiences. For example, in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, pupils are learning to understand the effects of the pandemic and how to express their feelings about it. You have also adapted the teaching of art and design technology so that pupils can make use of the equipment that they have at home.

- Leaders' checks show that almost all pupils are engaged with their education at this time. You have made sure that families have access to devices or data should they need it as well as packs of stationery to aid pupils' learning.
- You have made the teaching of reading a priority. In early years and key stage 1, pupils are continuing with their phonics lessons each day. The parents of pupils who are unable to attend the live lessons have education packs provided for them to help them guide their children's learning at home. You make sure that parents who need more support with this can approach class teachers. Teachers' regular checks are effective in ensuring that pupils read books that are both matched to the sounds they know, and those sounds pupils are learning.
- Older pupils who can read follow a newly introduced reading scheme, which is well suited to learning remotely. Pupils have access to an improved range of online books that can also be printed at home. This new scheme enables teachers to make regular checks of pupils' reading habits. Teachers have continued to run their story-time sessions during the national lockdown. This is helping to sustain pupils' interest in reading.
- You have organised learning so that in each year group, one teacher teaches lessons on site and creates home education packs, while the other teacher delivers live lessons for pupils at home. This means that all pupils, including those that are vulnerable, have been able to continue their usual education. You have ensured that vulnerable pupils have continued to access support from external agencies, which supports pupils to be able to learn.
- The new SENCo has made a start putting procedures and systems in place to improve the education for pupils with SEND. This includes reviewing the SEND register so that pupils' needs are accurately identified. Training for staff is ensuring that they gain confidence in the use of technology, to support pupils with SEND. For example, online 'breakout rooms' during live lessons are used well to promote small group discussion and provide pupils with SEND with one-to-one guidance and support. You recognise that there is still more to do to improve the expertise of all staff so that pupils with SEND can learn well in class and at home.
- The trust checks the work of you and your leaders. A newly established local academy committee of trustees and governors is asking appropriate questions about leaders' actions to improve the curriculum. Trustees and governors have also sought the views of external partners to confirm their own findings about the school. They read the latest research on effective remote education to support them to have the knowledge to hold you to account during this time.
- You value the support you have gained from the trust's network of principals who discuss educational research as well as the latest guidance for the safe

running of schools in the pandemic. Your staff have benefitted from a wide range of training from the trust's teaching institute. Teachers speak highly of the most recent trust-wide training day on developing reading and the webinars that support the remote delivery of mathematics.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, the executive principal, other senior leaders, seven members of staff and a group of pupils. We also spoke to the vice chair of the multi-academy trust board, the trust chief executive officer and the regional educational director to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We scrutinised recordings of live lessons. We observed online in real time a teacher supporting a child who was learning to read. We considered leaders' documentation for remote education, including the information on the school's website. We looked at leaders' evidence for attendance and engagement during the national lockdown.

We considered the 15 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including five free-text responses, and 32 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Academy Transformation 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

Liz Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector