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Andrew Roberts
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Roberts

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Central Primary School

Following my remote inspection with James Duncan, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 3 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 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 (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:

- build on the initial successes that you have had so far and continue to address historical weaknesses in pupils' understanding of English and mathematics in order that all pupils' learning is effective.

Context

- Since the last inspection, the school has appointed a new chair of governors. In addition, two new governors have joined the governing body. The school's business manager has left their post.
- Across the autumn term 2020, approximately one third of pupils had to be educated remotely. One Year 3 class was required to isolate twice.
- At the time of this inspection, the majority of pupils were being educated at home. The majority of vulnerable pupils were receiving education on site. All pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) were attending on site.

Main findings

- Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking the necessary actions to provide education in the current circumstances. Leaders have been proactive in ensuring access for all pupils. They have addressed barriers to learning with thought. Significant investment in digital equipment and connectivity, alongside the provision of on-demand support, has ensured all pupils can access the school's offer. Leaders monitor the engagement of pupils and have responded promptly where required. As a result, all are engaged.
- Leaders are ambitious for pupils. They have embraced new ways of working and have been innovative. For instance, they teach music via a school-led digital radio station.
- The remote learning offer matches that experienced by pupils in school. It is inclusive and spans all subjects. Subjects such as mathematics have been adapted with a focus on developing pupils' precision in calculations. Teachers have focused on the clarity of their instructions, meeting together in cross-phase teams to evaluate and improve one another's teaching.
- Most vulnerable pupils are educated on site. Leaders have ensured that all pupils, whether educated on site or remotely, receive any additional support that they require. For example, academic mentors have engaged pupils in work and, for those who require it, have listened to pupils read each day by telephone. Leaders have made reading a priority for all. Younger pupils receive pre-recorded phonics sessions each day led by familiar adults. Older pupils who may have fallen behind with learning to read receive daily sessions

appropriate to their needs. Support for all has continued both in and out of school.

- An experienced and knowledgeable special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator (SENDCo), working together with the inclusion lead, has a thorough understanding of the learning and other needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils with an EHC plan, and a significant number of those with SEND support profiles, have been accessing on-site education.
- Governors have embraced the importance of ensuring the school is providing an education. They drive the school forward strategically, while at the same time acting as a critical friend to school leaders. Documents show high levels of scrutiny and challenge. Governors delve deeply and with great insight.
- The head of school engages with a wide range of external support. She receives support via a selection of carefully chosen partners, nationwide. The local authority's school improvement partner provides focused support and challenge that are underpinned by their good understanding of the school's priorities. They make regular checks on their progress.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, the chief executive officer of Ashington Learning Partnership multi-academy trust, 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 looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 17 free-text responses, and 99 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 Northumberland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marcus Newby
Her Majesty's Inspector