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Caroline Burden
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Dear Mrs Burden

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Castleford Townville Infants' School

Following my remote inspection with Jenny Thomas, 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 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 at its previous section 5 inspection(s). The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in April 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:

- support middle leaders to develop the curriculum so that it is well sequenced across all subjects.

Context

- Since the last inspection, staffing has been through a period of change. The headteacher has provided stability to the school during this time. Five new governors have joined the governing body, including the chair of governors who previously chaired the school improvement committee (SIC).
- Approximately half the pupils had to access education remotely for a period of time during the autumn term 2020. A number of pupils in Reception Year had repeated periods of self-isolation.
- Most pupils are being educated at home at this time. Approximately half of vulnerable pupils and a third of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are attending school.
- At the time of this inspection, a very small proportion of staff were absent from school due to COVID-19. Leaders are managing further staff absence which is not COVID-19 related.

Main findings

- Leaders have made it a priority to ensure that all pupils have access to an education. They have thought carefully about how they teach the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils at this current time. Pupils learning remotely cover the same curriculum content as pupils learning in school. All pupils are receiving up to three hours of learning each day. Families have been provided with practical resources, stationery and any necessary information technology equipment to support children to access their learning at home.
- Leaders have risen to the challenges posed by current national restrictions. The core curriculum is being covered at the usual pace both in school and for pupils learning remotely, and every effort is being made to prevent pupils from falling behind. Leaders are ready to act quickly when all pupils return to school. They have plans in place to ensure the right help is available to support pupils to catch up and keep up.
- Leaders work hard with all families. Vulnerable pupils are offered a place in school, alongside pupils with SEND and the children of key workers. Those who are not in school are contacted regularly by leaders. Early reading is a priority for these pupils as well as for pupils being educated remotely. All pupils receive live and recorded phonics sessions daily. This is supporting the delivery of the phonics programme to pupils in early years and key stage 1, particularly for any pupils who have fallen behind with learning to read.

- The curriculum includes ongoing support for all pupils' personal development through events such as the live pantomime 'Robin Hood and His Socially Distanced Men'. This is to help prepare pupils for their return to school next week.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils with SEND are well supported. Due to the small number of pupils in school, adults are able to provide extra help. Pupils with SEND who are working remotely also receive additional support each day.
- Governors have positive relationships with school leaders. Governors continue to strengthen their knowledge and support for the school by taking part in local authority training. Governors know the importance of holding leaders to account and are developing their monitoring and accountability procedures to do this effectively.
- Leaders are proactive in their approach to seeking professional development. The school is part of the local English hub and mathematics hub as well as a 'Talk for Writing' project. Leaders have used these partnerships, along with the wealth of phonics knowledge brought by the headteacher, to help them make the necessary improvements to English and mathematics. Leaders know they need to continue this work across the wider curriculum.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, the chair and members of the governing body, the senior school improvement adviser, and subject leaders to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at recorded examples of live lessons, curriculum planning, lesson resources provided for pupils and participation records. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 22 free-text responses, and 13 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 Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Zoe Lightfoot
Her Majesty's Inspector