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Jane Fraser
Federation Headteacher
Newsome Junior School
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Dear Mrs Fraser

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Newsome Junior School

Following my remote inspection with Elizabeth Stevens, 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. 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:

- ensure that members of the governing body fulfil their strategic roles and hold leaders to account effectively
- check any curriculum content that pupils may have already covered, or has been missed with the introduction of the new curriculum, so that any gaps in pupils' learning are identified and resolved.

Context

- Since the previous inspection there have been few changes to staffing. Four teaching assistants have joined the school. The chair of governors has recently resigned. The vice-chair of the governing body is currently the acting chair of governors.
- During the autumn term 2020 approximately half of all pupils were educated remotely for a short period of time. This included all pupils in a Year 4 class and one class of Year 6 pupils.
- At the time of the inspection, approximately six out of every 10 pupils were being educated at home. About two thirds of those pupils identified as vulnerable were being educated on site. Half of those pupils with an education, health and care plan were also attending school.

Main findings

- You and the deputy headteacher have taken appropriate steps to ensure that all pupils have access to education. The head of school, with the support of other leaders, has trained staff well in the systems to deliver remote education effectively. Consequently, all pupils benefit from the same curriculum content whether they are working in school or at home. Teachers continue to check frequently on pupils' learning and provide them with useful feedback. You have ensured that those pupils working at home have access to either a suitable electronic device or paper-based resources.
- Prior to the pandemic, you changed many of the school's subject leader roles to make the best use of staff expertise. By March 2020, most subject leaders had already started the process of making improvements to curriculums. For example, teachers were delivering well-planned curriculums in both mathematics and English. Since then, you have implemented new curriculums in other subjects, such as art and geography. These curriculums help teachers to deliver learning in a suitable order and outline clearly what pupils should know and remember. However, there is more work to do in thinking through how gaps in knowledge that pupils may have as a result of switching to a new curriculum can be addressed in future learning.

- Teachers and pastoral staff know families well. The pastoral staff provide a wide range of additional support for pupils' and their families mental health and well-being. Staff continue to keep a check on the welfare of vulnerable pupils, whether they are working remotely or in school. Those pupils attending school benefit from a wide range of practical sessions such as physical education. Staff make regular contact with parents and carers to ensure that pupils working at home also benefit from appropriate help. This support is ensuring that pupils keep up with their learning, including their reading.
- You continue to prioritise reading. Whether pupils are working in school or at home they have access to a wide range of daily reading activities. These carefully planned activities develop pupils' phonic knowledge and their understanding of texts. Teachers keep a close check on those pupils who are still at an early stage of learning to read. Pupils read books that are matched well to the sounds that they know. When necessary, staff provide additional support to pupils to help them catch up with their reading quickly.
- You and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. The SENCo checks that teachers provide suitable learning activities and additional resources for this group of pupils. Those pupils with SEND working remotely continue to access the help and support that they need. Parents told us that they value the help provided by the SENCo and other teachers.
- Governors have ensured that the well-being of staff and pupils has remained a priority for you and other leaders throughout the pandemic. They are also knowledgeable about your arrangements for remote education. That said, governors have allowed the current circumstances to limit their ability to fulfil their strategic roles. For example, some members of the governing body do not have a good enough understanding of the curriculum to challenge leaders effectively about the decisions they have made regarding the school's curriculum.
- You and other leaders have welcomed a wide range of appropriate support provided by the local authority and a national leader of education (NLE). For instance, advice and help from the NLE has been highly effective in improving the quality of support for pupils with SEND.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke with you and the deputy headteacher, a group of subject leaders, a group of support staff and representatives of the governing body. We also spoke with a representative of the local authority and an NLE to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We considered a range of documentation provided by you and other leaders, including curriculum plans, samples of pupils' work and minutes of governing body meetings. We spoke with a group of pupils and observed them read to a trusted adult and spoke with a small number of parents on the telephone. We reviewed responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 34 free-text responses. We also reviewed 28 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Garry White
Her Majesty's Inspector