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Peter Gaul
Principal
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Dear Mr Gaul

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of King's Leadership Academy Hawthornes

Following my remote inspection with Jasper Green, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), 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 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in January 2020.

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 pupils who have not engaged positively in remote education catch up with their lost learning as quickly as possible
- ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is well planned and sequenced, especially in science, geography and history.

Context

- Since the last inspection, the trust has appointed an interim chair of governors. The roles of senior leaders have been restructured to increase their focus on the academy's areas for development. Three new middle leaders have also been appointed.
- In the autumn term 2020, about two thirds of pupils studied at home during short periods of self-isolation. Year 10 pupils were the worst affected.
- At the time of this inspection, most pupils were learning at home. Just over half of vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending school. Half of pupils with education and health care plans were learning at school.

Main findings

- Pupils are expected to follow their usual timetables, whether they are in school or learning online. Teachers have been trained on how to plan and deliver lessons online. Teachers are confident about using technology to deliver the curriculum.
- The remote education offer allows pupils the opportunity to take part in live lessons, independent work and discussion. However, only three quarters of pupils at home have accessed the remote education offer. This is despite the efforts that you and your staff have made to engage with them and their families. As a result, these pupils will have considerable ground to make up when they return to school.
- In September 2020, you and other leaders noticed that a larger group of pupils than usual found reading difficult. As a result, action has been taken to set up an additional class in Year 7 to support the weakest readers. An in-house reading programme has also been developed that helps staff pinpoint the gaps in pupils' reading skills. However, it is too soon to see if this work is having the desired impact.
- The trust has provided subject specific training to teachers in all subjects. By the start of the pandemic, school leaders had worked with the trust to make changes to the English and mathematics curriculum. However, the curriculum planning and the order in which pupils will learn new subject content is not as

well developed in some other subjects. These include science, geography and history.

- All pupils in Year 11 are able to continue with their studies, whether they are learning at school or at home. Staff continue to offer Year 11 pupils support with their post-16 plans. Two thirds of the year group recently attended a virtual session on apprenticeships.
- Leaders believe they have improved support for pupils with SEND. Teachers confirm that they are better informed about pupils' specific needs than they were in the past. This is enabling them to adapt the curriculum appropriately to help the learning of pupils with SEND. Action has been taken to support those pupils who found learning at home challenging. These pupils now attend school each day and get support from teaching assistants.
- Trustees have a realistic view of the school's strengths and the challenges it still faces. Trustees have supported you in ensuring that pupils are able to access an education during these challenging times. They have made sure that all staff and pupils have access to electronic devices so that learning can continue online. They have also reviewed the outcomes of remote education, such as pupils' work and feedback from parental surveys, to check how well the current offer is working. Trustees hold leaders to account through regular meetings in which they ask questions about work to improve the curriculum and provide pupils with an education.
- The Great Schools Trust has been the main source of support for the school since it joined in 2015. Before the pandemic, teachers had been developing a new curriculum in collaboration with other schools in the trust. This work had a greater impact on some subject areas than on others. During the pandemic, collaboration has continued remotely, particularly in science. Teachers spoke positively of the professional development that they receive from the trust. They value the academic and enrichment opportunities that the trust provides to pupils.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, senior leaders, the multi-academy trust chief executive officer and chair of the board of trustees, pupils and staff to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also watched one live lesson and reviewed curriculum documentation. We looked at 22 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including two free-text responses, and 43 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Great Schools Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the

director of children's services for Sefton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Strong
Her Majesty's Inspector