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Alison Jobling
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Dear Ms Jobling

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Durham Community Business College for Technology and Enterprise

Following my remote inspection with Eleanor Belfield, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 16 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 had previously been judged to require improvement. Pupils who are on roll at Fyndoune Community College are being educated on site at this school. Therefore, both schools were inspected at the same time. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in October 2018.

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:

- recruit additional governors, especially parent governors, so that the governing body becomes more representative of the community it serves.

Context

- Durham Community Business College for Technology and Enterprise is federated with Fyndoune Community College. In September 2018, leaders brought pupils from both schools together onto the Ushaw Moor site. Since then, in practice, the two schools have operated as one entity. A consultation on the amalgamation of the two schools has recently closed. The two schools are expected to merge on 12 April 2021.
- Since the last inspection, the interim executive board (IEB) has been replaced by a governing body. The chair and vice-chair of the IEB have continued in their roles onto the new governing body. A head of science has been appointed. Some additional temporary posts have been made, supported by external funding sources. A restructure of staffing is currently under way.
- Approximately 84% of pupils were educated at home when the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term. Approximately 60% of the school's vulnerable pupils were educated on site. In addition, approximately 30% of pupils with an education, health and care plan were educated on site.
- At the time of this inspection, just over 90% of pupils were being educated on site. A few pupils were continuing their education remotely.

Main findings

- Across the spring term, school leaders have made wise decisions and ensured that pupils receive an education. All parents who responded to our survey praised the quality of education provided during the national lockdown. You have done much to minimise disruption to learning. Teachers have successfully kept most pupils engaged in learning. Wherever possible, teachers have stuck to the planned curriculum.
- You had largely completed a review of the curriculum across all subjects when the pandemic began. You made good use of support from other schools and the local authority. The school had adopted a three-year key stage 3, and curriculum leaders have revised their curriculum plans to ensure that pupils built a firmer foundation of knowledge before starting GCSE courses. In key stage 4, an above-average proportion of pupils are now following the English baccalaureate pathway.
- Teachers told us they continually checked on pupils' learning throughout the national lockdown. Teachers are currently completing these checks now that pupils have returned to school. Teachers are using valid methods, such as quizzes and recall tasks focused on the components of knowledge they have

taught. Curriculum leaders are pushing forward with the planned curriculum. They have begun to provide extra catch-up sessions for pupils with gaps in their knowledge. Some faculties are providing one-to-one tutoring and small group teaching in addition to timetabled lessons. You provide an extra catch-up lesson at the end of the day for targeted pupils in Year 11. After Easter, you intend to extend this offer to pupils in Year 10.

- The teaching of reading now has a higher profile. Teachers assess pupils' reading skills when they enter the school. Weaker readers in Year 7 told us about the support and encouragement they receive. You shared evidence that many weaker readers are improving their reading skills and finding more enjoyment in books.
- Despite the national lockdown, Year 11 pupils completed mock examinations remotely in January. Consequently, teachers had useful information on what pupils knew and remembered. You told us that pupils in Year 11 will continue to complete course content until Easter. Teachers will then recap the knowledge they have identified as most essential for pupils' futures. You and the governors have some emerging ideas about how teachers will ensure that centre-assessed grades for Year 11 pupils will be fair and valid.
- Teachers are continuing to provide remote education for any pupils who need to be educated from home. Teachers have become adept at using technology to stream their lessons to pupils at home. The remote education capability now in place means pupils are not unduly disadvantaged when learning from home.
- You ensured that most vulnerable pupils attended on site during the national lockdown. You worked closely with colleagues in social care and the local authority to check on the few vulnerable pupils who were not in school. Your staff made frequent welfare check phone calls. Now that pupils have returned to school, a pastoral leader is supporting vulnerable pupils in each year group 'bubble'. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are getting a lot of personalised support. Teachers and support assistants were attentive to their needs during the national lockdown. Teachers feel that many pupils in the key stage 3 nurture classes have flourished due to the strong partnership fostered with their families.
- The governors are providing effective scrutiny of leaders' actions. Although much of their time is taken up with the merger of schools and the staffing restructure, they have continued to challenge leaders' curriculum thinking and provision of remote education. However, efforts to recruit parent governors from within the community have not, as yet, been successful.
- You have welcomed the support provided by the One Vision programme and the local authority. You have managed this support effectively, using it to develop the quality of education. As a result, most staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey told us that they think the school has improved since the last inspection.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, curriculum leaders, pastoral leaders and a group of teachers. We spoke to the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and to some Year 7 and some year 11 pupils. We also spoke to the chair, vice-chair and other members of the governing body 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 45 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 Durham local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector