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29 March 2021

Nico De Groot  
Interim Headteacher  
Woodfield School  
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West Midlands  
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Dear Mr De Groot

### **Additional monitoring inspection of Woodfield School**

Following my inspection with Christopher Stevens, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 2 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 serious weaknesses.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, most of Ofsted's monitoring inspections are being carried out remotely. This inspection, however, took place on-site due to significant concerns about safeguarding and leadership and management.

The inspection took place because the school was judged to have serious weaknesses at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in March 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:

- enable all pupils to make a smooth transition back to school full-time from 8 March, including finding out more about what pupils have learned when they have not been at school, adapting the curriculum accordingly, and working closely with families to ensure that any pupils who are reluctant to come back are encouraged and helped to do so as quickly as possible
- ensure that when pupils join the secondary phase from other schools there is an appropriate system in place to identify how well they can read and how best to support them if they are at an early stage
- work with the local authority to decide what improvements can be made to the environment on the secondary site, and put these into action as soon as possible to make the school a more suitable place for pupils to learn.

## **Context**

- This special school caters primarily for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs, and for those who have autism spectrum disorder, on three different sites.
- The substantive headteacher was absent for some of the autumn term 2020 and left the school at the end of that term. In the headteacher's absence, the school was led by the three senior leaders who run each of the sites. A local multi-academy trust (MAT) is now providing leadership on a day-to-day basis. You took over as interim headteacher just over a week before this monitoring inspection was carried out.
- The school has been affected by outbreaks of COVID-19 at various points. During the autumn term, all pupils in key stages 1 to 3 and just over half of those in key stage 4 had to work at home at some point, either to self-isolate or because not enough staff were able to be in school.
- Around half the pupils have been attending school for at least some of the week since January 2021. On the primary site, pupils stay for a shorter day than usual. On the secondary site, pupils have been attending for between two and four days a week, depending on what has been agreed between home and school. High rates of infection in the school, some issues with transport to school, parents' and pupils' anxieties and small classrooms have affected leaders' decisions about how many pupils to have on site at any one time.

## **Main findings**

- The school has been through a period of considerable turbulence since it was placed into a category of concern in March last year. Nevertheless, leaders

and staff have improved various aspects of safeguarding, the monitoring of attendance and the oversight of alternative provision.

- Leaders have thought carefully about how best to ensure that pupils are safe, both when they are in school and when they are learning remotely. They have kept in contact systematically with pupils and their families this term. In addition, leaders are quick to respond if they have not had contact from a pupil when expected – for example if they have not joined a remote lesson – and pursue any concerns promptly to check that pupils are safe. During this national lockdown leaders have, when necessary, visited pupils' homes or initiated 'safe and well checks' involving the police and other agencies. The strong relationships that leaders have with families also allow them to offer support when needed, such as resources to help pupils to do their work, food parcels and referrals to other agencies. Records of safeguarding concerns are thorough.
- The pupils who have been in school this term have usually been following their normal timetables, with some adaptations as necessary. Alternative provision placements have also continued. Leaders have tried to ensure that where pupils have been at home, they have access to technology so that at least some learning can be completed online. Where this has not been possible, staff have provided packs of work. Leaders have made some sensible adaptations to the curriculum to make it more relevant to the current circumstances. For example, in the secondary phase, in personal, social, and health education, pupils are currently learning about the safe use of social media.
- Teachers make frequent checks on whether pupils are accessing their work and completing it. For example, when a pupil has not submitted work, staff call parents to discuss this. Pupils can email their teachers for help when needed. Secondary-aged pupils to whom we spoke during the inspection said that teachers responded to these emails quickly. A few pupils have engaged very little, or not at all, with remote learning.
- Since the previous inspection leaders have thought about the curriculum and the way in which this is planned and sequenced. They have started to make checks to ensure that the content that pupils learn is suitably broad and ambitious.
- Leaders in the primary phase have good systems in place to identify pupils' starting points in reading when they join the school. Pupils who are at the early stage of learning to read follow a suitable systematic phonics programme. However, the books that these pupils read do not always match closely to the sounds they are learning. In the secondary phase, there is no clear system to identify pupils' starting points in reading when they join the school or the steps that need to be taken to help them to improve.

- There have been improvements in the way the school uses and monitors alternative provision. Far fewer providers are used now, and those that remain have been selected to match pupils' interests and aspirations. Leaders visit the pupils at their provision frequently, interspersed with telephone contact where needed. Systems to monitor pupils' attendance at the provision are clear and effective. Leaders are well aware of the need to support Year 11 pupils to make a positive transition to the phase of education, employment or training and this process is already underway.
- The classroom environment on the main secondary site needs attention. The building itself presents challenges as some of the classrooms are small and awkwardly shaped, but in addition some of the classrooms are shabby and do not provide a good learning environment for the pupils.
- Governors have continued to provide support and challenge to leaders during a time of considerable turbulence for the school. They have focused on practical matters such as asking the school about attendance. They are keen to establish positive relationships with the new interim headteacher and have already started to do so. The chair of governors from the MAT is working alongside the governing body to provide support and development.
- The local authority has provided some regular support and challenge to leaders since the last inspection, focusing on the areas for improvement. This has had some impact and is due to continue. A range of appropriate support is planned from the MAT with which the school is working.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted onsite. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, staff, the CEO of the MAT, a group of pupils, and representatives of those responsible for governance to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also listened to pupils reading, made brief visits to lessons and looked at safeguarding and attendance records and curriculum planning. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses, and 34 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 Coventry. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

**Sue Morris-King**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**