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Dear Mr George

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Falmouth School

Following my remote inspection with Tracey Reynolds, 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 have serious weaknesses.

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

- monitor and evaluate new initiatives that have been implemented, especially relating to the curriculum, to ensure they are having the intended impact
- consider carefully the impact any new initiatives may have on staff workload.

Context

- The school joined The Roseland Multi Academy Trust in September 2020. A deputy headteacher left the school in August 2020. Two governors left the local governing board.
- At the start of spring term 2020, approximately 95% of pupils were educated at home. A small number of vulnerable pupils and pupils with education, health and care plans attended on site. The proportion of pupils on site increased by around 10% during the spring term as other vulnerable pupils were identified.
- At the time of this inspection, almost all pupils were attending school on site. A small number of pupils were continuing their education remotely due to medical needs.
- At the time of this inspection, two members of staff were not in school due to shielding for COVID-19 reasons.

Main findings

- You, other leaders, trustees, and governors show a real determination and passion to provide an education for pupils at Falmouth School in the current circumstances. Strong communication between school and home has been key in ensuring parents and pupils know what was expected of them during both the delivery of remote education and the return to on-site schooling.
- You successfully ensured pupils continued to receive their usual curriculum during spring term and on their return to school. Much work has been undertaken by leaders at all levels to redesign the school's curriculum to provide a clear progression path for pupils from Year 7 to Year 13. This work continued during lockdown periods. Subject leaders have responded with great enthusiasm to bring about the transformation in curriculum design and delivery. A significant amount of change has taken place at the school in recent months but a rigorous evaluation of the impact of new initiatives is yet to take place.
- The improved curriculum carefully considers key themes and components pupils need to learn in each subject. Subject leaders have built in important opportunities for these to be reinforced regularly, through revisiting key knowledge and incrementally developing the complexity each time.

Assessment of key learning has been integrated well into the curriculum. Regular checks are carried out to ensure that pupils know more and remember more. You understand the importance of pupils reading widely and often. Strategies to encourage pupils to read have been fully integrated across the curriculum.

- You ensured that the transition for Year 7 pupils into secondary school was handled smoothly and sensitively. Clear support was put in place for their arrival at Falmouth School during a pandemic. They have settled well and gained in confidence. The school has given a high priority to the curriculum provision for Year 11 and Year 13 pupils. They continue to study the full range of curriculum subjects and receive valuable careers advice and guidance to ensure they are well prepared for their next steps.
- Parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive in their views about the school. Almost all staff who responded to the staff questionnaire said that they were proud to be a member of staff at the school. However, a significant number of staff raised concerns that some new initiatives implemented by leaders were increasing their workload too much.
- The educational provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has improved through the effective work of the special educational needs coordinator. Expectations for these pupils have been raised considerably. The SEND teaching team have received helpful training to improve their practice and confidence. Teachers are better informed about each pupil and are able to meet their individual needs increasingly well. Parents of SEND pupils commented very positively about the support for their children.
- Effective provision is in place for the small number of pupils who continue to access their education remotely. Regular contact is made with these pupils to monitor their well-being and their understanding of the learning provided.
- Trustees and governors are very knowledgeable about all aspects of the school's work. They provide an appropriate level of challenge and support to leaders. Trustees and governors work well together to bring about improvements in the school. They ensured pupils received an appropriate education during periods of lockdown.
- You, your leaders and staff have welcomed the significant amount of support that has been received. Working with trustees and other leaders and teachers from schools within the multi-academy trust has been instrumental in improving the confidence and practice of staff at all levels. Other support, such as from the school improvement partner and the local authority, supports the school's trajectory of improvement well.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior and middle leaders, the multi-academy trust's chief executive officer, representatives of trustees and the local governing board and pupils to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown. Written communication was also received from a local authority officer.

We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 56 free-text responses, and 55 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of trustees and chief executive officer of The Roseland Multi Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Rowe
Her Majesty's Inspector