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25 March 2021

Ellen Bullock  
Headteacher  
Moorhouse Primary School  
Crossley Street  
Rochdale  
Lancashire  
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Dear Miss Bullock

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Moorhouse Primary School**

Following my remote inspection with Adam Sproston, 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 have serious weaknesses.

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

- embed the recent changes to the teaching of phonics so that all staff build on what pupils already know and can do
- improve the knowledge and skills of new subject leaders so that they can check on how well the revised curriculum is enabling pupils to build their knowledge over time.

### **Context**

- Since the previous inspection, the leader for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) left. A new leader for SEND was appointed in January 2021. The local authority appointed an interim executive board (IEB) to replace the governing body in October 2020.
- During the autumn term, half of all pupils had a period of time when they were educated at home. Pupils in the Year 4 and Year 4/5 classes had to self-isolate at home on two occasions.
- At the time of this inspection, one third of all pupils and around three out of every four vulnerable pupils were attending school on site. All pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan were also being educated in school.
- At the time of this inspection, the headteacher was absent. The deputy headteacher was appointed as the acting headteacher in January 2021.

### **Main findings**

- Leaders have taken the necessary actions to ensure that pupils are provided with an education, whether they are learning at home or being educated on site. Leaders know their families well and make sure that they keep an extra eye on those pupils who are more vulnerable. Leaders have provided pupils with access to electronic devices and the internet when required. Parents and carers appreciate the advice that staff have given them to help support their children's learning at home. For example, staff have created videos that show how children can access the work set by staff. This means that more pupils are now engaging in their learning at home.
- Leaders have dealt well with a period of turbulence in staffing and governance during the pandemic. Throughout this time, they have worked productively with staff, and used external support well, to address weaknesses at the school. As a result, the school's curriculum has been redesigned across all subjects. New curriculum plans provide clear guidance for teachers on how to build pupils' knowledge in each subject over time, from the early years to Year 6.

- Leaders have successfully adapted the curriculum to ensure that pupils, including vulnerable pupils, study all curriculum subjects during these challenging times. This is the case for pupils learning at home or in school. In most subjects, pupils learn the content that they would usually study at this time of the year. Subject leaders have modified curriculum plans and identified content that would be difficult to deliver remotely. For example, in mathematics, they have moved more difficult concepts such as learning about fractions, to a time when all pupils will be taught on the school site.
- Some subject leaders have accessed a variety of training to develop their subject knowledge and leadership skills. This has helped them to become more confident and competent in leading their areas of responsibility. However, this is not the case in all subjects. In some subjects, such as music, history and geography, leaders are new to their role and changes to the curriculum are very recent. These new leaders do not have the necessary expertise to check effectively how well pupils are learning the revised curriculum.
- Recent changes to the phonics curriculum are beginning to have an impact on pupils' reading fluency. However, as these changes are very new, some staff are still developing their skills in planning activities that build on what pupils already know and can do. That aside, leaders have ensured that pupils learning at home, including vulnerable pupils, and those in school continue to access their usual phonics curriculum. Young children and older pupils at the early stage of reading access daily pre-recorded phonics lessons. They have access to books which match to the sounds that they have learned.
- The special educational needs coordinator has worked alongside teachers to ensure that pupils with SEND are supported at home and in school effectively. She keeps records of pupils' engagement with learning and checks the progress that they are making. Pupils with an EHC plan continue to receive the same support as they did prior to the third national lockdown.
- The IEB provides strong support and challenge. Members of the board have made a positive contribution to recent improvements to the curriculum. Despite the pandemic, the IEB has met with leaders and made sure that pupils are receiving an education at this time.
- The local authority has provided effective support to the school. This has helped leaders to identify, monitor and evaluate the actions taken to bring about improvement. Leaders have also benefited from support to revise the school's curriculum and to develop the role of subject leaders. Early impact of this support is evident in the consistent approach to delivering the reading and mathematics curriculums.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you and other senior leaders, subject leaders, staff, pupils, members of the interim executive board and representatives of the local authority. We evaluated leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We reviewed documents such as the new curriculum plans. We looked at 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 12 free-text responses, and 22 staff questionnaires. We also sampled pupils' work. We observed pupils from Year 1 and Year 2 reading to a familiar adult.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Barlow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**