

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



16 April 2021

Sarah Holmes-Carne  
Principal  
Kenton School  
Drayton Road  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
Tyne and Wear  
NE3 3RU

Dear Mrs Holmes-Carne

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Kenton School**

Following my remote inspection with Eleanor Belfield, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 18 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 has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in February 2019.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) 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 there is sufficient emphasis on the subject content and knowledge taught to pupils as the key stage 3 curriculum is developed
- provide subject leaders with further training on the principles of effective curriculum design.

### **Context**

- Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes in senior leadership and governance. The trust appointed a new chief executive in September 2019. The chair of the trust took up office in March 2021. Three assistant principals have also been appointed since the last inspection.
- Approximately 95% of pupils were educated at home in the spring term, before the school re-opened to all pupils. During that time, 45% of vulnerable pupils and 65% of pupils with an education, health and care plan were educated on site.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately 95% of pupils were attending on site.

### **Main findings**

- Leaders and those responsible for governance have ensured that education continued throughout the period when schools were only open to some pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions. You planned carefully how to deliver education remotely. Teachers used a blended approach of workbooks, online activities and some live lessons. Pupils' initial engagement in remote learning was low. Some pupils lacked computer hardware and wi-fi access. You provided almost 30% of pupils at the school with a laptop. As a result of this endeavour, pupils' engagement with remote education increased. These measures will remain in place for pupils who may still need to learn from home.
- Almost all pupils have returned to school following the period when schools were only open to some pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions. You told us that pupils returned to school enthusiastically. Leaders are determined to resume the normal curriculum quickly. The school has developed a programme of personal development to support pupils' well-being as they return to the classroom. This work is necessary to get pupils settled back into school and back on track.
- You have surveyed pupils about their learning and welfare every half term throughout the pandemic. During the periods of remote education, you used short, regular tests to find out what pupils had learned and remembered. As a result of this, teachers have made sensible decisions about what will be

taught to Year 11 and Year 13 as they complete their GCSE and A level courses.

- You have recently changed the school's curriculum. You explained that this is to cover the national curriculum in greater breadth and depth in key stage 3. Teachers have carefully considered how subjects are taught and how pupils will be assessed. However, there is more work to do to ensure teachers deliver the right knowledge in the correct sequence in all subjects.
- Vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive extra support and help. Specialist external support, such as speech and language therapy, continued during the period when schools were closed to pupils in the spring term. Pupils with SEND have had their support plans updated and receive extra help as they return to the classroom. This support is effective because you have targeted it to those who need it most.
- Early in Year 7, teachers identify pupils who are not confident in reading. They are supported with extra reading sessions. There is a phonics programme in place for the weakest readers. You recognise that there is more work to do to improve the reading and vocabulary of pupils, so that they can better read and understand texts in their other subjects.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the community and the school. They understand how the pandemic has affected the long-term and short-term priorities of the school. Governors have made strategic decisions during the pandemic, such as curriculum change and the development of remote education. They have made sure that there is external support for the school, and they regularly assess how effective this support is. As a result of this work, governors provide appropriate challenge and help to the school.
- The school is drawing on support from a range of external partners, including other schools and a national leader of education. This support is focused on strategic developments such as the curriculum and subject leadership. The school has also used other local networks and local authority support to make things work during the pandemic. This collaborative work is effective.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, representatives of those responsible for governance and a representative of the local authority. We also held discussions with pupils and staff, 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 15 free-text responses, and 176 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Kenton Schools Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Newcastle. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Carl Sugden  
**Seconded Inspector**