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Simon Underwood
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Dear Mr Underwood

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Corby Business Academy

Following my remote inspection with Damian Loneragan, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 23 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. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in April 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 the content of the school's revised curriculum is implemented effectively to support pupils' academic and personal development
- ensure that recently introduced actions are effective in supporting pupils to read more widely across the curriculum and develop their use of an extensive vocabulary
- ensure that all teachers in the main school are effective in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to access and make progress through the curriculum.

Context

- Since the inspection in April 2019, there have been changes to school leadership. You became associate principal in autumn 2019, having previously been joint head of school. Additional senior leaders and several subject leaders have also been appointed. The chair of the governing body was elected in September 2020.
- The school has a specialist unit for 75 pupils with SEND who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The unit is oversubscribed currently with 77 pupils.
- Over the first part of the spring term, almost all pupils were educated at home. About one fifth of vulnerable pupils and one fifth of pupils with an EHC plan were attending on site.
- At the time of this inspection, almost all pupils were attending on site. There were 42 pupils receiving education remotely. Year 11 and the specialist unit had the largest numbers of pupils receiving education remotely.

Main findings

- Leaders have ensured that pupils continue to study the usual range of subjects in the school's curriculum, whether in school or at home. Many parents commented positively on leaders' efforts to provide education over the past year and the support provided for remote learning.
- Over the spring and summer of 2020, leaders developed new curriculum plans. Subject leaders have thought carefully about ordering knowledge in ways that should help pupils remember content and build on what they already know. The curriculum is not yet fully implemented. Leaders are checking that plans will include all the important knowledge that pupils need, including that needed to support pupils' personal development.

- Subject leaders have changed the order of some content or adapted how they teach some knowledge because of the disruption to learning caused by COVID-19. This means pupils are continuing to learn new knowledge across the curriculum. Leaders have ensured that all pupils receive careers education. They have continued supporting pupils' wider personal development, but they have had to postpone some events that would usually take place. Pupils in the specialist unit follow a curriculum tailored to their needs. This helps these pupils to develop the knowledge and skills needed for life beyond school.
- Teachers use a variety of ways to check pupils' understanding. Teachers spot when pupils are less secure in their understanding and adjust their teaching accordingly. Leaders use assessment information to adapt their curriculum plans. They ensure that pupils revisit knowledge when their understanding is less secure. Leaders identify any individual pupils who need extra help with their learning.
- Pupils in Year 11 and Year 13 are continuing to work towards their qualifications. They feel that teachers are preparing them well for the end-of-course assessments. Pupils are continuing to receive advice and guidance to help them make choices about what they want to do at the end of their examination courses.
- Pupils who struggle with reading receive the extra help they need to improve their reading knowledge. Leaders have increased opportunities for all pupils to read more widely and develop their vocabulary across subjects. These changes are recent. They have not yet had time to make a difference to the quality of pupils' writing and wider reading.
- Pupils who are still working at home learn the same knowledge as their classmates, with extra resources and help available if needed. Teachers check that these pupils understand their learning.
- Leaders have ensured that vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEND continue to get the help and support from outside agencies that they need. The specialist unit provides effective support for pupils' academic and personal development. Leaders have made improving the learning of pupils with SEND in the main school a priority. However, some teachers are not effective in meeting these pupils' needs. Leaders are helping these teachers to improve.
- The Brooke Weston Trust (the trust) and governors have continued to check regularly on leaders' work. They have ensured that throughout the pandemic, leaders have kept focused on improving the quality of education. The trust and governors challenge leaders to show that the actions they are taking are making a positive difference.

- The trust executive headteacher provides helpful support and challenge to you and other leaders. This helps you identify the right priorities for improvement. The trust has provided support for developing the new curriculum plans. The trust leader for SEND has helped to review the provision for pupils with SEND. The trust has provided practical support, for example by developing policies and procedures for providing education and support with technology, that has enabled you to focus fully on providing education in the current circumstances.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders including the special educational needs coordinator and designated safeguarding leader, leaders of the specialist unit for pupils with SEND, the chief executive officer and executive headteacher from the Brooke Weston Trust, the chair of the local governing body, pupils and teaching staff, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also reviewed information available on the school website about the school's curriculum and the arrangements to provide education remotely. We looked at 71 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 48 free-text responses, and 104 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Brooke Weston Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Wilson
Her Majesty's Inspector