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Dear Mr Haseldine

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Dean Trust Wigan

Following my remote inspection with David Selby, 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 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:

- ensure that all pupils who struggle with their reading receive appropriate support with their phonic knowledge so that they can read with fluency and accuracy.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher, two deputy headteachers and four teachers have left the school. A deputy headteacher has joined the school on secondment from another school in the trust. An assistant headteacher has also been appointed.
- In the autumn term 2020, approximately one quarter of pupils in the school were educated at home for a short period. Some pupils experienced repeated periods of self-isolation. This was particularly the case for those pupils in Year 8.
- At the time of this inspection, the school was only open to vulnerable pupils and children of key workers. Approximately one in every 10 pupils were being educated on site. Approximately one quarter of vulnerable pupils and one in every seven pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were being educated on site.

Main findings

- You and the school's leaders have ensured that teachers can deliver the curriculum effectively in the current circumstances. Pupils continue to study their usual subjects. This is the case for those pupils who are working in school and for those who are learning at home. In some subjects, teachers have made appropriate changes to curriculum plans. This means that they can continue to deliver practical aspects of the curriculum remotely. For example, in science, teachers show pupils recordings of practical experiments.
- Those responsible for governance have taken decisive action to strengthen senior leadership. Senior leaders and trust leaders have worked together with subject leaders to develop new curriculum plans. These plans outline clearly what pupils must know and remember, and in what order. Despite COVID-19 restrictions, leaders' work to improve the quality of curriculum planning has continued.
- Teachers have effective strategies to deliver the curriculum to those pupils learning remotely and in school. Staff work together to share good practice. For example, they have developed a range of systems to check on pupils' learning. Teachers use this information to help pupils to catch up with their learning when needed. Pupils are positive about their learning experiences during this national lockdown.

- Leaders check that pupils have access to suitable electronic devices. Teachers check routinely whether pupils are accessing their learning. Staff use this information to contact parents and carers if pupils are not taking part. Staff also provide comprehensive support to develop pupils' confidence in how to access remote education.
- Staff have prioritised the welfare of vulnerable pupils throughout the pandemic. You and the school's leaders have established appropriate systems to check the well-being of vulnerable pupils. For the most part, vulnerable pupils attending school access the same lessons as those pupils learning remotely. Pupils attending school receive additional support from teachers in the classroom, including from subject specialists. This group of pupils also benefit from extra opportunities. For example, they enjoy practical lessons in physical education and food technology.
- All pupils have access to reading lessons to develop their comprehension skills and their knowledge of vocabulary. Teachers read age-appropriate books to pupils regularly. Leaders provide phonics support to a small number of pupils who struggle with their reading. However, this positive support is not readily available to all pupils who may need it.
- You have plans in place to check on the learning of pupils in Year 11 before they leave the school. This includes some formal assessments. Staff provide Year 11 pupils with appropriate guidance to prepare them for the next stage of education, employment or training. This group of pupils also benefit from additional lessons in some subjects such as English, mathematics and science. This is helping them to catch up with any learning they may have missed or forgotten.
- Leaders have taken appropriate action to strengthen support for pupils with SEND. Leaders have provided relevant training for staff. This is helping staff to meet the needs of this group of pupils, including those learning at home. Teachers use a range of effective strategies to adapt how the curriculum is delivered for pupils with SEND. This group of pupils also benefit from additional support from teaching assistants.
- Trust leaders and governors are well informed about the actions that you and other leaders have taken to improve the school. For instance, those responsible for governance have overseen leaders' work alongside trust representatives to improve subject curriculum plans. Those responsible for governance have also ensured that pupils continue to learn in the current circumstances. For example, they have challenged you about the proportion of pupils that continue to access learning from home.
- Leaders have worked with a local school to create an age-appropriate personal development curriculum and strengthen the school's behaviour policy and practices.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with you and other senior leaders. We met with a group of subject leaders and a group of teachers. We also met with representatives of The Dean Trust, representatives of the local governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide an education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We reviewed leaders' curriculum plans and examples of teaching materials. We spoke with pupils in both key stages 3 and 4 about their experiences of learning in school and remotely. We checked on the school's systems to contact parents. We reviewed responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 27 free-text responses, and 92 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Emmett
Her Majesty's Inspector