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31 March 2021

Lindsey Clarke
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Clarke

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Rowlands Gill Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Nick Turvey, 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 require improvement.

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 has received two successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in September 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:

- ensure that there is a consistent approach to teaching phonics across the school
- support teachers in planning targeted extra help for those pupils who are struggling to read in Years 3 to 6
- develop subject leaders' skills in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the revised curriculum.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, there have been no significant changes to the senior leadership team. Three teachers have left, and one teacher has been recruited. The school has successfully appointed new governors. The school is currently recruiting a leader for the early years.
- During the autumn term of 2020, a small proportion of pupils needed to be educated remotely. One class of 24 Reception and Nursery children had to work from home for a period of self-isolation.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately three quarters of pupils were working remotely. Four fifths of pupils with education, health and care plans were attending on site. Approximately two thirds of the school's vulnerable pupils were also in school.

Main findings

- Leaders, governors and staff have collectively devised and implemented a well-planned remote learning offer. Parents and carers typically describe the offer as 'superb' and 'fantastic'. Your offer consists of a wide range of carefully thought-out activities. Pupils receive live and recorded lessons, with follow-up activities and resources. Each class has been split into two groups. This has helped teachers to meet the needs of pupils when delivering remote learning.
- During the autumn term 2020, leaders made sure that parents, staff and pupils received training for remote education. Clear guidance on keeping safe online was also given. This work has supported the efforts of you and your team to continue pupils' education in the current circumstances.
- Teachers have developed a range of ways to feedback to pupils about their learning and to support independence. Even the very youngest children have benefited from this approach. Teachers also read and record instructions for the tasks pupils are asked to complete. With a click of the button, pupils hear the instructions of the worksheet. This helps those pupils who may struggle with reading the text independently access the same learning as their peers.

Support for pupils' well-being and personal development is another positive feature of the remote curriculum. For example, pupils take part in fun and lively weekly 'social meet' sessions. Pupils' participation in the online learning offer is typically high.

- Prior to March 2020, subject leaders devised a new curriculum. Leaders were ready to implement the new curriculum in September 2020. In the current circumstances, teachers are aiming to deliver this curriculum as much as possible. However, they have made adaptations. The practical content within some subjects has been re-ordered. Leaders have plans in place to ensure that the practical content is covered when pupils return to school. However, subject leaders have not yet monitored and evaluated the impact of the new curriculum on pupils' learning in full.
- Pupils in the early years and in Years 1 and 2 receive regular phonics sessions online. However, the school currently uses aspects of two different phonics programmes. This leads to some inconsistency in terms of teachers' approaches and expectations, particularly in the early years.
- In Years 3 to 6, some low-attaining readers have not secured the phonic knowledge they need to help them read fluently. The remote education offer does not include specific phonics input for these pupils. Leaders plan to address this when pupils return to school.
- Vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who attend on site receive the same curriculum offer as pupils working at home. Leaders have ensured that external specialist services have continued to support pupils' academic and emotional development during the third national lockdown. Pupils who are on site continue to receive suitable support and guidance from familiar adults.
- Governors have been fully involved in the decision making in relation to remote education. They have monitored the offer carefully and have worked collaboratively with you to adapt and evolve it. Governors offer appropriate challenge and support to leaders. They are committed to supporting leaders in all aspects of school improvement.
- You have developed a strong working partnership with the local authority. The local authority has supported you in shaping your new curriculum and in developing the remote education offer.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you and other leaders, teachers, governors and a representative of the local authority. These meetings were carried out to discuss leaders' actions to provide education for all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also sampled parts of recorded lessons and other aspects of the school's remote learning offer. We scrutinised curriculum documentation and reviewed the 74 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 57 free-text responses and the 21 responses to the questionnaire for staff.

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

Yours sincerely

Ruth Dollner
Her Majesty's Inspector