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Emma Wilson-Downes
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Dear Mrs Wilson-Downes

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Felixstowe School

Following my remote inspection with Fiona Webb, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 16 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 special measures.

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 require special measures at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in November 2017.

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 the revised curriculum plans are implemented effectively in all subjects
- ensure that all teachers are effective in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to access and make progress in the curriculum.

Context

- Since the monitoring inspection in January 2020, there have been changes to the senior leadership team. The executive headteacher left in December 2020. An assistant headteacher became special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) in March 2020. Subject leadership has been re-organised, and several new heads of department have been appointed.
- Approximately 90% of pupils were educated at home when the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term. About 80% of vulnerable pupils and 57% of pupils with education, health and care plans were attending on site.
- There was a phased return for pupils from 8 March 2021. The school has been open for all year groups since 11 March. At the time of this inspection, 96% of pupils were attending on site. A very small number of pupils were shielding and continuing to receive education remotely.

Main findings

- Leaders, governors, and the Unity Schools Partnership (the trust) have ensured that pupils receive an education, whether on site or at home. Leaders have continued to offer the school's usual range of subjects. Many parents commented positively on leaders' actions to provide education at the start of the spring term 2021, when the school was closed to most pupils.
- Following the monitoring inspection in January 2020, subject leaders revised their curriculum plans to address weaknesses in the curriculum. Subject leaders thought carefully about the knowledge that pupils should learn as they access the different subject curriculums. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 study the full range of national curriculum subjects before choosing their examination courses.
- Leaders introduced the revised curriculum in September 2020. There are currently differences in how well the curriculum plans in different subjects are being implemented. Teachers are being trained to help them implement the new curriculum effectively. Some subject leaders are more effective at checking how their actions are making a difference to pupils' learning than others.

- Subject leaders are continuing to use the planned assessment weeks to identify gaps in pupils' learning and make further adjustments to their curriculum plans. This term, teachers have used a variety of ways to check what pupils have remembered from previous lessons while learning at home. They have adapted their teaching plans to ensure that pupils are secure in the knowledge they are learning.
- Almost all of Year 11 pupils and all students in Year 13 have continued to study their chosen examination subjects. Leaders have ensured that support has continued to help these pupils decide what they want to do when their studies end.
- You have made reading a high priority for the school. All teachers are helping pupils to develop and use their reading skills in lessons. There is a particular focus on Year 7 and 8 pupils who have struggled with reading in the past. Leaders have put in place a programme of support for these pupils. There are plans to expand this to include readers in older year groups who need additional help.
- Leaders have ensured that vulnerable pupils continue to get the help and guidance that they need. This support helps these pupils to access learning more successfully.
- Leaders are acting to address weaknesses in provision for pupils with SEND. Teachers have information about what will help individual pupils and support their learning. However, some teachers are making better use of this information than others. A core of parents still feel that teachers are not supporting their child's learning well enough.
- Leaders have developed the school's remote education provision since March 2020. Pupils can access live, online lessons. This means that pupils who are isolating can follow the same curriculum as those who are in school.
- The trust and local governing body (LGB) have been determined that COVID-19 should not hinder work to improve the quality of education the school provides. The trust and LGB regularly check on leaders' actions and whether they are making the difference intended. The trust and LGB checked the quality of remote education provided at the start of the spring term.
- Subject leaders have benefited from the support from the trust and a partner school to develop their curriculum plans. The trust and partner school have also provided support and guidance for the recently appointed SENCo. The trust's director of secondary education has provided helpful challenge to senior leaders and heads of department. This has helped you gain an accurate view of where further improvements are needed. The trust also provided advice, policies, procedures, and resources that have helped you to provide education in the current circumstances.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, groups of staff, the student support leader, the learning support leader, the chief executive officer of the Unity Schools Partnership, the secondary education director from the trust and members of the local governing body to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also observed a reading intervention session. We held discussions with two groups of pupils to gather their views on the education that they are receiving. We looked at 130 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 73 free-text responses, and 75 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Unity Schools Partnership multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Wilson
Her Majesty's Inspector