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1 April 2021

Neil Pritchard
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Dear Mr Pritchard

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Pewsey Vale School

Following my remote inspection with Tracey Reynolds, 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. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in June 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:

- monitor and evaluate the impact of the curriculum to ensure it is effective in helping pupils to know and remember more
- provide a well-sequenced programme of phonics teaching to pupils in the early stages of reading.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of the trust finance committee has been appointed. There have been new appointments to senior roles, including a special educational needs coordinator. New staff have been appointed to curriculum leadership roles in English, history, physical education, and food technology.
- When the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term, approximately 85% were educated at home. Approximately 65% of vulnerable pupils and 50% with education, health and care plans attended in person.
- At the time of this inspection, 70% of pupils were attending on site. All pupils in Year 10 were being educated at home, due to a small number of positive cases of COVID-19 within the cohort.

Main findings

- Following the first national lockdown, you wisely brought forward your plans to update the school's computer systems. Pupils and staff are well trained in the use of these. There was a seamless transition to online learning at the start of the spring term. Parents are impressed with the quality of education you provide remotely. You calmly and skilfully managed the closure of the Year 10 'bubble' during the inspection. These pupils had access to live lessons from the start of their first day at home.
- You hold detailed knowledge of the technology that pupils have in their homes and have used this to provide and upgrade devices. As a result, pupils who need to stay home can learn effectively. You have galvanised the support of the local community. Together, you have supported vulnerable pupils with donated devices, fundraising efforts and food banks.
- You have well-considered plans to support Year 11 pupils in their remaining months at school. Pupils continue to follow their chosen courses as teachers make their final checks on what they know and can do. You have ensured that pupils have firm plans for September 2021. As a measure of your ambition for this year group, you have arranged a programme of teaching to prepare them for their post-16 choices.

- Every pupil is included in your vision for the curriculum. Subject leaders have begun to make this a reality through their curriculum planning. There are some strong examples of ambitious plans, for example in English. You recognise the need to share the best examples with other subject leaders. Some have not yet fully understood their role in ensuring a high-quality curriculum and checking its effectiveness.
- You have identified that a significant number of pupils join the school unable to read well enough. Specialist staff provide extra teaching in reading for these pupils. Nevertheless, these pupils do not follow a carefully sequenced programme of phonics. This means that their ability to learn is sometimes limited for longer.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from the supportive measures you have in place. You have strengthened the information and training available to teachers. This helps them to tailor their lessons to pupils' needs. Leaders regularly include pupils in discussions about their support plans. However, you have not yet established other systems for checking that the new curriculum is working well for pupils with SEND.
- Leaders speak highly of the support provided to them by the trustees during this period of national restrictions. The chair of the board of trustees is actively involved in the work of the school. Trustees intend to increase their capacity to monitor the quality of the curriculum by creating a separate board of local governors.
- Subject leaders have received useful support from expert colleagues at a teaching school. This has helped to improve some aspects of the curriculum. The school benefits from specialist support in personal development and careers education through an external partnership.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, your senior leadership team, representatives of the board of trustees, and external partners, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also scrutinised curriculum documentation and samples of pupils' work. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 59 free-text responses, and 40 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Lydia Pride
Her Majesty's Inspector