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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
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15 April 2021

Caroline King  
Executive Headteacher  
Thomas Fairchild Community School  
Forston Street  
Hoxton  
London  
N1 7HA

Dear Miss King

**Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Thomas Fairchild Community School**

Following my remote inspection with Alison Colenso, 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 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 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:

- implement the new curriculum plans, ensuring that staff understand the order in which pupils need to learn key knowledge in all subjects
- ensure that the reading curriculum in Years 3 to 6 focuses on developing pupils' understanding of the books that they read
- prioritise provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) on their return to school, so that any gaps in their learning and development are swiftly addressed.

### **Context**

- Since the previous inspection, no changes have been made to the school's senior leadership.
- During the autumn term 2020, approximately 75% of pupils had to be educated remotely. Five 'bubbles' across the year groups needed to self-isolate for a period of time at different points in the autumn term.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately 80% of pupils were being educated at home. Just under 50% of pupils who are vulnerable and 10% of those with SEND were attending on site.

### **Main findings**

- Since January 2021, a mix of live and recorded lessons has been provided to pupils online. Staff have worked with parents and carers to ensure that they are confident in using the technology required for learning at home. This has included ensuring that all pupils who need them have access to laptops. All subjects usually taught in the classroom are also provided online. Pupils who are attending school receive the same curriculum as pupils learning remotely. The normal school timetable is being taught. Leaders have given careful consideration to how individual subjects will work when all pupils return to school. For example, leaders have identified how physical education will be taught in light of any remaining COVID-19 restrictions and guidance.
- Teachers track the extent to which pupils are engaging with online learning, including those who are vulnerable. Any concerns are swiftly followed up. Any pupils not taking part in online learning are supported and have been brought back into school. The number of pupils attending school has increased from the time of previous national lockdowns.
- Prior to the pandemic, the school's phonics programme was already well established. Following the inspection in February 2020, leaders and teachers made changes to the school's programme for teaching reading in Years 3 to 6. Leaders promote a love of reading, and pupils read daily. However, some

pupils' understanding of the texts that they read is undeveloped. This is not given sufficient emphasis in the delivery of the curriculum.

- Leaders have also prioritised the mathematics curriculum. Subject leaders from the other federation school have worked with Thomas Fairchild staff to support their understanding of the curriculum. Teachers' immediate focus is on ensuring that all pupils are secure with basic mathematical knowledge on their return to school. They have also planned more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge, for instance through mathematical reasoning.
- Leaders have introduced new curriculum plans in other subjects. These plans are at an early stage and have not been implemented. Training has started to help staff understand the core knowledge pupils need in each subject and the order in which it is taught. However, teachers' understanding remains insecure.
- All pupils with education, health and care plans have been offered a place in school during the COVID-19 restrictions. However, very few have taken up this offer. Leaders have ensured that, where appropriate, pupils with SEND continue to receive speech and language therapy, albeit online. Teachers make regular contact with these pupils. Nevertheless, leaders are aware that some pupils with SEND have fallen behind. When they return to school, any gaps in these pupils' learning and development should be addressed as a priority.
- Governors are holding leaders to account for the quality of the education provided in the current context. They have needed to work closely with leaders to ensure a successful transition to the new staffing arrangements, following the recent restructuring. Leaders keep governors well informed of the changes that are happening.
- The local authority is continuing to support leaders, including in areas such as human resources and school improvement. This has enabled school leaders to remain focused on pupils' needs and the education provided by the school. The local authority has also supported with the development of the mathematics curriculum. This includes staff training.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to the executive headteacher, the head of school, senior leaders, staff, governors and the school improvement partner to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also discussed and looked at the school's curriculum plans and sampled the remote education programme. We looked at 12 staff responses to the inspection survey.

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

Yours sincerely

Adam Vincent  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**