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Gemma Dixon
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Dear Ms Dixon

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Forest Moor School

Following my remote inspection with Marcus Newby, 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 have serious weaknesses.

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 September 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:

- ensure teachers quickly complete their assessment of the gaps in pupils' learning across all subjects and assure themselves that teachers have refined their short-term plans for pupils in response to these assessments
- check that all staff understand what assessment tools they should use to identify pupils' additional needs
- ensure staff are trained in the school's chosen reading scheme and interventions.

Context

- Two senior leaders have left the school since the last inspection. The headteacher has restructured the senior leadership team and developed new middle leadership posts. The appointments to these posts were internal and made between January and March 2021.
- The school is governed by an interim executive board. A new chair and vice-chair were appointed in January 2020. The Department for Education has confirmed that the school will become an academy and join the Wellspring Academy Trust in the next few months.
- The school is a special school catering for pupils with social, emotional, and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. At the start of the spring term, 35% of pupils were educated at home.
- At the time of this inspection, 67% of pupils were in school with 31% on a phased return. A very small number of pupils were accessing education remotely. This was due to their individual special educational needs.

Main findings

- Senior leaders know their pupils well. They are providing teaching and pastoral support that meets the needs of pupils at the current time. Senior leaders have thought carefully about how to accommodate pupils on site in a safe manner. They have designed a home learning package for the small number of pupils who are unable to attend school fully at present. Teachers plan the remote learning for each individual pupil who cannot attend the school site at the present time. The remote education offer includes online work and paper-based activity packs.
- The school is governed by an interim executive board. The members of this board are experienced in governance and knowledgeable about school improvement. The interim executive board members have a clear understanding of the school's strategic and operational needs. They have continued to monitor the school's provision for pupils through monthly

meetings with the headteacher. The link governor for safeguarding maintains regular checks of the school's safeguarding systems.

- Senior leaders reviewed the school's curriculum between March and September 2020. The new curriculum offer is ambitious and has coherent long- and medium-term plans. However, teachers' implementation of these plans has been interrupted by staff and pupil absence because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, in this nine-to-16 special school, staff sometimes teach a subject that is not their specialism. This combination of teaching to new plans and reliance on shared planning means that staff are unsure about how to determine pupils' progress in some subjects.
- Senior leaders have introduced a range of assessment tools to identify pupils' additional needs. These assessments provide useful information but are not fully embedded in the school. Staff are not able to talk about them confidently or make the most of the information they provide.
- Staff know that developing reading is important. They are skilled in engaging pupils' interest in reading as part of subject lessons and at tutor time. However, many staff are unclear about the school's phonics reading scheme. There is a reliance on a small number of staff who have the training and skills needed to teach phonics and deliver reading interventions. Leaders recognise that this is an area they need to address. This is because many pupils, regardless of their age, are at an early stage of reading and need phonics teaching to help them read new words.
- The headteacher has ensured that all pupils' EHC plans have been reviewed so that they reflect pupils' current needs. This has helped teachers plan lessons for pupils that better support the objectives written into the EHC plans. Staff who teach the older pupils in the school have worked closely with specialist careers advisers. All Year 11 pupils now have plans for future training. Older pupils spoke highly of the guidance they had received for their next steps.
- Pupils said they felt supported by staff in the school and know who they should go to if they are worried about anything. Some pupils are vulnerable when they are out and about in their local community. They need help outside of school. Staff monitor pupils' wider needs very closely and are quick to refer to external agencies to get additional support when it is needed.
- The interim executive board has commissioned appropriate training for staff and support for leaders. For example, the local authority adviser recently supported senior leaders in a review of the school's remote education offer. The external school improvement partner has maintained regular checks on the school's improvement priorities. Colleagues from the Wellspring Academy Trust have provided staff with training around behaviour and curriculum

planning. School leaders are aware of the significant amount of school improvement work that still needs to be done.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance, a representative of the local authority and those providing external support to the school to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also heard pupils read, looked at pupils' work and reviewed school documents linked to remote education and pupils' health and safety. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including seven free-text responses, and 21 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Head
Her Majesty's Inspector