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Wendy McCormack
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs McCormack

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Lark Hill Community Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Jackie Stillings, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 23 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 a judgement of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in April 2018.

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 work resumes on the implementation of the new curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics, to minimise the impact of the delay caused by the pandemic.

Context

- There have been a number of leadership changes since the previous inspection. You were appointed as executive headteacher in May 2019 and a head of school took up post in January 2020. Two deputy headteachers have left the school and four assistant headteachers are now in place. Most members of the governing body were appointed in February 2021.
- When the school was only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions at the start of the spring term 2021, the vast majority of pupils were educated at home. Three quarters of those pupils identified as vulnerable and over half of all pupils with an education, health and care plan attended school.
- At the time of the inspection, almost all pupils were attending school. A very small proportion of pupils were self-isolating.

Main findings

- You have taken the necessary steps to ensure the return to school for all pupils was seamless, despite the current challenging circumstances. Staff are dedicating more time to nurture-based activities that support pupils' well-being following a period when most have been educated remotely. You have swiftly put support in place for the small number of pupils who have returned to school feeling anxious. These actions are helping pupils settle back into school routines quickly.
- In the 12 months prior to the pandemic, subject leaders were developing curriculum plans for all subjects. Training from the local authority, and your links with other schools, has aided this work. This has resulted in curriculum plans that are well organised and build on pupils' prior knowledge. However, the pandemic has slowed down the full implementation of the new curriculum. In some subjects, pupils have not had the opportunity to experience the new plans that are in place. This means that subject leaders are unable to evaluate how well the new curriculum, in subjects other than English and mathematics, is helping pupils to know and remember more.
- Since the full reopening of the school in March 2021, you and subject leaders have taken time to identify what pupils have learned and remembered from the taught curriculum. This information has been used carefully to adapt the current curriculum. This is to ensure any learning that could not take place when pupils were being educated at home can now be taught. For example,

all pupils have recently completed a range of science investigations to help them rediscover their knowledge and skills in this area.

- Teachers have quickly gained a clear overview of the phonic knowledge that younger pupils, and those at the early stages of reading in key stage 2, have remembered. Staff are providing additional sessions, targeted at those pupils who have gaps in their phonic knowledge. Older pupils are regaining their comprehension and grammar skills through focused teaching sessions. Leaders' checks are ensuring that pupils continue to read books that closely match the sounds they know. This is helping them become more fluent readers. You have ensured teachers and staff read to pupils daily to promote a love of reading.
- Teachers continue to closely monitor the welfare of vulnerable pupils. You have specialist staff in place for vulnerable pupils to offer further support with their well-being. You can also access external agencies to work with pupils, parents and carers where appropriate. These actions are helping vulnerable pupils settle back into school quickly.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) provides effective training and support for all staff. This ensures that they are well equipped to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. The SENCo has ensured there are support plans in place for each pupil with SEND. Through close monitoring, she continually reviews the impact of these plans on pupils' learning. Access to external agencies, such as speech and language provision, ensures pupils with SEND receive the specialist help that they need.
- Training for governors, delivered by the local authority, is helping them to carry out their roles and responsibilities more effectively. Governors are knowledgeable about the work of leaders and staff to provide an effective education in the current circumstances. They challenge and support you and other leaders in equal measure. Governors are mindful of the well-being and workload of you and your staff.
- The local authority supports you and school staff well. The local authority adviser has remained in close contact with you, other leaders, and governors throughout this challenging period. She has an accurate view of the priorities around the curriculum and supports you in your work to achieve these.

Evidence

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

We also reviewed documents relating to the school's curriculum. We listened to pupils read and talked with a group of pupils from key stage 2 about their experiences of school. We looked at 26 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 23 free-text responses, and 56 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

John Tomlinson
Her Majesty's Inspector