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Andrew Robinson
Principal
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Dear Mr Robinson

Additional, remote and on-site monitoring inspection of Stoke High School – Ormiston Academy

Following my inspection with Paul Wilson, Her Majesty’s Inspector (HMI), and Kim Hall, Her Majesty’s Inspector (HMI), of your school on 18 and 19 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 initially carried out remotely but moved to an on-site visit due to significant concerns about safeguarding.

The inspection took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections. The school’s most recent section 5 inspection took place in March 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.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- implement more rigorous systems to assure themselves that the correct safeguarding actions are in place
- put in place a more coherent strategy to develop reading, particularly for the weakest readers
- ensure that teachers know how to use information about pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to help them make the best possible progress.

Context

- You were previously the head of school and you were appointed as principal in September 2019. The multi-academy trust appointed a new regional director in September 2020. Approximately 50% of the teachers are new since the previous inspection.
- During the third national lockdown, 90% of pupils were educated at home. During this time, 35% of pupils with an education, health and care plan and 40% of vulnerable pupils were attending on site.
- At the time of the inspection, 92% of pupils were being educated on site. A small number of pupils were isolating as a result of COVID-19 and studying at home.

Main findings

- During the current circumstances, leaders have checked on pupils' participation in remote learning and on their understanding of it. The parents who responded to our survey praised leaders' recent actions to provide education during the pandemic. Pupils also appreciate teachers' work to provide remote education, though they are happy to be back on site. Year 7 pupils say staff have helped them settle in well despite the challenges due to COVID-19.
- Over the first national lockdown, you used the time to review the school's curriculum. Leaders consulted with staff about creating a curriculum appropriate for pupils. You worked with subject leaders to write new curriculum plans for every subject. These plans show that new content builds on what pupils have learned before. Subject leaders and teachers have

completed training to help them understand how to put the new curriculum into practice.

- Leaders have taken effective action to offer the planned curriculum for all subjects in the current circumstances. Subject leaders check the work of teachers. They use these checks to identify and suggest improvements. Teachers make regular checks on pupils' understanding. They give guidance on how pupils can improve their work and they adapt what pupils learn next. However, teachers in some subjects do this more effectively than others. Leaders are working to address this.
- Leaders continue to offer remote learning to pupils who need to study at home. They have adapted the order in which pupils learn some of the content. This is because some content is more suitable for learning at home. Leaders make sure that pupils still have the knowledge they need to understand new learning.
- There are several programmes to support weaker readers. Staff provide individual or small-group support for pupils. However, it is not clear how these different programmes fit together into a wider plan to support reading. The adults providing support do not always know how to help the weakest readers develop their knowledge of phonics.
- Year 11 pupils have continued to study their examination subjects. They say their teachers are preparing them well for assessments at the end of the course. Leaders have ensured pupils get helpful information and advice about careers and their next steps in education.
- Staff have taken appropriate actions to support pupils with SEND during the lockdown. They have helped these pupils to settle back into learning in school. Leaders have identified the pupils' individual learning needs. They have then put in place specific help. Leaders have ensured that teachers have information about the needs of pupils with SEND. However, teachers do not always know how to use this to help these pupils make the best possible progress.
- Staff have provided helpful support for vulnerable pupils as they return to school. They have checked on their welfare and on their progress in their studies. Leaders have prioritised the teaching of literacy in all subjects. This helps those pupils who speak English as an additional language and vulnerable pupils to learn.
- Governors are committed to the school. They understand the school's context, its strengths, and the challenges it faces. Governors have been very supportive of leaders' work during the pandemic. They are starting to ask leaders more challenging questions about whether the actions they are taking are making a positive difference.

- The multi-academy trust has increased its support for leaders during this school year. It has given training to help subject leaders plan and put in place the new curriculum. The trust has reviewed the school's safeguarding and its plans for pupils with SEND. Leaders are currently putting the recommendations from these reviews into practice to improve these areas of the school's work.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff make frequent contact with vulnerable pupils who are absent or studying at home. They monitor pupils who speak English as an additional language when they have concerns about them. Leaders have trained staff so that they know how to keep pupils safe. You make and record the appropriate checks when new staff join the school.
- Pupils say they feel safe. They know how they can raise concerns if they have them and how to keep themselves safe online. However, leaders are not rigorous in checking that they have referred concerns to the appropriate external agencies. They are not tenacious in following up with agencies to get the support that pupils with SEND need. The systems leaders use to ensure that appropriate actions are in place and recorded are not as thorough as they could be.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely on the first day, and on the school site for the second day. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, representatives of the multi-academy trust, pupils, staff and representatives of those responsible for governance to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also inspected the school's safeguarding systems and records. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 11 free-text responses, and 50 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Ormiston Academies 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

Charlie Fordham
Her Majesty's Inspector