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19 April 2021

Emma Cadman
Principal
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Dear Mrs Cadman

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of The Hill Primary Academy

Following my remote inspection with Alison Stephenson, 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 was judged to require improvement at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in May 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 that the revised curriculum sets out precisely what pupils should know, and in what order, in all subjects
- monitor the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning and progress.

Context

- The principal, vice-principal and the special educational needs coordinator have been appointed since the last inspection. The chair of governors took up his role in September 2019.
- During the period when the school was closed to most pupils, from the start of the spring term, approximately a quarter of pupils attended on site. This included half of vulnerable pupils and the majority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- At the time of this inspection, 82 pupils from three class 'bubbles' in the Reception Year, Year 4 and Year 6 were self-isolating at home.
- Currently, a small number of staff are absent due to COVID-19. Leaders are managing this absence through a combination of internal and supply staff.

Main findings

- Leaders are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances. They have carefully adapted the curriculum to cater for the needs of pupils in school and those who are learning remotely. Leaders have postponed the teaching of 'hands on' practical subjects such as art and design and technology until the summer term, for safety reasons. Staff have expanded the current science curriculum to allow for this change.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have revised the school's curriculum. The curriculum sets out what pupils should know, and when, in most subjects. Leaders plan to complete this work across all subjects over the coming months. Leaders and governors have not been able to check the effectiveness of the revised curriculum, due to COVID-19 restrictions. They do not yet have a clear picture of the impact on pupils' progress.
- Staff are in the process of checking what pupils remember from the spring term's teaching in all subjects. Staff are using this information to provide extra support for individuals or small groups, as required.
- Leaders have rewritten the reading curriculum since the last inspection. All staff have been trained to deliver the new phonics scheme. When an inspector observed pupils reading, it was clear that staff encourage pupils to apply their phonics knowledge when reading unfamiliar words. Pupils read confidently from books that are well-matched to their phonics knowledge.

- At the time of this inspection, three class bubbles were self-isolating due to COVID-19. Pupils learning at home can access a range of live and recorded lessons. Staff ensure that remote education matches the curriculum provided on site.
- Leaders and staff recognise that pupils with SEND may need a curriculum that is adjusted to their needs. For example, staff may provide activities with enlarged text and visual instructions. Curriculum leaders ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are an integral part of the subject plans.
- Over the past year, staff have kept in regular contact with the families of vulnerable pupils. They have provided food parcels and resources such as laptops and other devices for home learning.
- Governors continue to meet and oversee the work of the school. They are aware of leaders' ongoing work to revise the curriculum. They provide support and challenge, prioritising pupils' safety and the education of vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEND. Governors are mindful of pressures on staff workload and well-being.
- The multi-academy trust has provided support with policies and risk assessments. This has reduced the operational burden on school leaders. Staff appreciate access to central trust services to support their well-being.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, members of staff, the director of primary education from the multi-academy trust and the chair of governors to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils in the current circumstances.

We also observed pupils reading to members of staff and reviewed curriculum plans. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 12 free-text responses, and 17 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 or equivalent of the Astrea multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Barnsley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christine Watkins
Her Majesty's Inspector