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20 April 2021

Niki Carpenter  
Head of School  
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Dear Mrs Carpenter

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Wednesfield High Academy**

Following my remote inspection with Christopher Stevens, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 18 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 requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspection. Prior to this, the school was judged to require special measures. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in December 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:

- continue to support pupils who need extra help to improve their reading
- develop pupils' love of reading by increasing the opportunities they have to read a wide variety of texts.

## **Context**

- You were appointed as head of school in September 2020 when the existing headteacher took up the post of executive headteacher within the multi-academy trust (MAT). Since the previous section 5 inspection, an additional deputy headteacher and two additional assistant headteachers have been appointed. A new curriculum leader for science was appointed in January 2020.
- Approximately 10% of pupils were educated on site between the start of January and 5 March 2021. Twenty percent of pupils with education, health and care plan and 25% of pupils identified as being vulnerable were attending on site.
- All pupils are expected to attend school. At the time of the inspection, no groups of pupils were being educated at home.
- At the time of inspection, no staff were absent due to COVID-19. However, several members of staff were shielding at home. Senior leaders were managing this internally, with support from the MAT and school staff.

## **Main findings**

- You and your staff are working together well to provide pupils with an education. You have successfully welcomed all pupils back to school, addressing any practical problems that could prevent a swift return to learning. Staff have celebrated the progress pupils made when learning remotely. Staff morale is high. Leaders listen to their ideas and concerns. As a result, staff 'go the extra mile' willingly to ensure pupils receive an education in the current circumstances. For instance, stepping in to support colleagues who are shielding.
- Before the pandemic, leaders made changes to broaden the key stage 3 curriculum. As a result, pupils have more time to develop their knowledge in languages and the arts. Alongside this, curriculum leaders developed 'learning journeys'. These set out what pupils should learn in each subject. Leaders made sensible changes to these plans when pupils were learning remotely. They checked that pupils were engaging, offering additional help appropriately. Consequently, pupils' participation rose steadily to around 90% at the beginning of March.

- As pupils have returned to school, leaders have made further changes to curriculum plans. Teachers have shared these changes with pupils. These updated plans blend earlier and new learning. This ensures that pupils have the knowledge they need to build on what they already know, and helps teachers address any gaps.
- In lessons, teachers use quizzes to check what pupils know and remember from remote learning. They use this information to adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs. They record this information for each pupil. This is helping teachers to get better at pinpointing the knowledge that pupils have not remembered. Leaders know that these systems need to focus sharply on the knowledge pupils need for future learning, so pupils know and remember more.
- Leaders continue to prioritise reading provision. This is improving. However, there is no school library. This limits pupils' ability to read for pleasure. Leaders plan to introduce a virtual library to help foster pupils' love of reading. Staff that support pupils who need extra help with their reading have been trained well. During the lockdown, leaders provided resources to pupils learning at home to help them with their reading. As pupils have returned, leaders have plans in place to support pupils who need extra help to improve their reading. They understand that this support must start swiftly.
- Leaders have taken steps to support vulnerable pupils. Pupils receive support from a range of professionals, such as a social worker that is based in school. Before the lockdown ended, leaders identified vulnerable pupils who may have needed extra support to help them return successfully to school. They put appropriate steps in place to reassure pupils and their families. These were successful in building parents' confidence in the school's COVID-19 arrangements.
- Year 11 pupils and Year 13 students told inspectors that they have been supported well. Leaders have reacted quickly to adapt to changes in qualifications. For instance, they have taken steps to ensure that pupils studying vocational qualifications understand the changes and revised deadlines. These measures are robust. Staff have continued to deliver careers education. They provide pupils with information about their 'next steps' and pupils confidently ask for help and advice.
- Leaders liaised closely with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) during lockdown. They worked with external agencies to ensure that pupils had the support needed. This has helped pupils with SEND to successfully return to school. Leaders' work with pupils with SEND in the current circumstances has improved the school's provision. Leaders know that pupils with SEND will continue to need further support.

- The interim advisory board (IAB) comprises members of the trust and other skilled professionals. They focus on the right priorities. They question what leaders tell them and provide appropriate support and challenge. They visit the school regularly to check the effectiveness of leaders' actions. Consequently, they are contributing effectively to the school's work.
- MAT leaders have helped manage many of the practical challenges. School leaders value this support. Alongside this, the MAT continues to invest and train staff to further develop expertise. This support is proving successful.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, senior, pastoral and subject leaders, teachers, the special educational needs coordinator, pupils, the chair of trustees, the chair of the IAB and the chief executive of the MAT to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We reviewed curriculum plans, examples of materials used in live lessons and samples of pupils' work. In addition, inspectors viewed recordings of live lessons. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 33 free-text responses, and 67 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the University of Wolverhampton multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wolverhampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ian Tustian  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**