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20 April 2021

Christopher Luxford  
Headteacher  
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Milton Abbot  
Tavistock  
Devon  
PL19 0PS

Dear Mr Luxford

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Milton Abbot School**

Following my remote inspection 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 two successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in September 2018.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 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:

- review the curriculum so that it sets out the important knowledge pupils must learn, and by when, in all subjects
- ensure that all governors' share a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and use this to hold leaders to account rigorously.

### **Context**

- Since the previous inspection, two teachers have joined the school. A new chair of governors took up post in December 2018.
- At the start of the spring term, when the school was closed to most pupils, approximately 50% of pupils were educated at home. About 50% of vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were educated at school during this period.
- At the time of this inspection, all pupils were attending on site.

### **Main findings**

- When schools partially closed in March 2020, you adapted the curriculum carefully to make sure pupils could continue their learning, whether at home or in school. You re-organised the content in some subjects, such as French. Now that all pupils are back in school, teachers are prioritising the content that had been postponed. For example, a specialist language teacher is providing extra French lessons. This is helping pupils to catch up with missed knowledge.
- Subject leaders have improved the structure and organisation of the curriculums for English, mathematics and history. This is helping pupils to know and remember more. For example, in key stage 1 pupils understand the early history of flight better because they have previously read about the Wright brothers. Your work to improve the full curriculum has been hampered due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Consequently, there are still weaknesses in the design of the curriculum in some subjects, such as music and computing. In these subjects, there is a lack of clarity about what pupils should know and by when.
- Leaders check what pupils have understood and remembered effectively. They have found that some pupils are not using a wide range of vocabulary in their writing. Teachers have allocated catch-up sessions to broaden pupils' vocabulary and make sure that they have enough time to practise their writing. This work is recent, so it is too soon to measure the impact of these actions.

- Leaders have ensured that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of reading across the school. Recent training in phonics is improving staff's subject knowledge. Pupils' early reading books are closely matched to the sounds they know. As a result, more pupils are reading with increasing confidence. You ensure that pupils are reading appropriately challenging books. For example, in Years 5 and 6, pupils read Dicken's 'Oliver Twist' to explore fictional characters.
- You have suitable plans to ensure that vulnerable pupils, including those with SEND, are well supported. Teachers are providing appropriate activities to help pupils to settle back into school, with a strong focus on reading. Staff provide extra reading sessions to help pupils who have fallen behind to catch up quickly.
- Governors share your high expectations for pupils' welfare. Governors, who form the 'quality of learning committee', oversee the work of leaders and other staff effectively. This means that they have a firm grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, these insights are not shared in enough detail with all governors. Consequently, the full governing body lacks the information it needs to hold senior leaders to account rigorously.
- Your work with external partners to develop the role of middle leaders is paying off. Subject leaders have improved their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are appropriately focusing on securing greater consistency in teaching. Consequently, pupils are increasingly benefitting from improved approaches to the teaching of subjects, such as English. The early years leader has used the recent advice and support from the local authority to improve the organisation of the Nursery and Reception class.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. I spoke to you, subject leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

I also looked at some school documentation, such as subject plans and minutes from leadership meetings. I looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 13 free-text responses, and eight 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 Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Costello  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**