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Gemma Bailey  
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Dear Miss Bailey

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Oakfield Lodge School**

Following my remote inspection with Steve Bentham, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 16 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 at its previous section 5 inspections. 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 (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 curriculum plans in all subject areas set out clearly the key knowledge that pupils need to learn.

## **Context**

- Oakfield Lodge School is a pupil referral unit (PRU). It educates pupils aged 11 to 16 years. The local authority provides places at the PRU for pupils who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. All pupils attend on a full-time basis. A small number of pupils access some specialist off-site vocational education.
- A considerable number of pupils at the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Almost one fifth of pupils have an education, health, and care (EHC) plan.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has moved into a new purpose-built building on the same site as the previous temporary building.
- In the last 18 months, there have been several changes to the staffing structure. There have also been changes to the management committee, which is responsible for the governance of the PRU. Two governors have left. Four new governors have been appointed, including the chair of governors.
- During the spring term 2021, the school remained fully open to provide education for all pupils. Approximately one half of pupils continued to attend on site, including one third of pupils who have an EHC plan.
- At the time of this inspection, just over one half of pupils were attending on site. Some pupils with specific needs continue to be taught by a specialist teacher at home. Almost one fifth of pupils at the school were self-isolating. Several pupils were part way through reintegration into mainstream schools.

## **Main findings**

- Prior to arriving at Oakfield Lodge School, many pupils have experienced considerable disruption to their learning. They are often disengaged with education. This includes pupils with SEND. You have successfully adapted how you enrol pupils who have had to move schools during the third national lockdown. Throughout the pandemic, you and the school's staff have continued to provide effective support to re-engage these pupils with education. You have adapted your curriculum well to meet pupils' individual learning needs, including those with SEND. You provide pupils with an appropriate education, whether they are working at home or in school.
- Following the wider reopening of schools in March 2021, pupils, including those with SEND, have settled quickly back into school routines. They are

engaging well with the curriculum whether they continue to learn at home or in school. Teachers are taking effective steps to find out what knowledge pupils know and can remember. They are using this information well to adapt their curriculum plans so that pupils can catch up with any missed learning. Staff also ensure that pupils have an appropriate personal development curriculum.

- You, other leaders and the staff at Oakfield Lodge School take time to get to know each pupil. This enables you to provide effective personalised support so that pupils can access the curriculum. You make sure that when pupils join the school, they focus on English, mathematics and science. This approach has been beneficial to those pupils who have joined the school during the pandemic, or who have returned following periods of remote education. Those pupils who access vocational courses at alternative providers are also continuing with their learning.
- Prior to the pandemic, you had taken effective steps to develop further your curriculum plans. As a result, your revised plans enable teachers to have a better oversight of the order in which they should teach new subject content. That said, the planning for some areas of the curriculum does not make it clear exactly what pupils need to know and remember at the different stages of their learning. Teachers have not thought sufficiently well about the knowledge that makes up the broader subject content.
- You have focused effectively on developing reading across the school, including during the pandemic. Teaching staff provide pupils with tailored support in reading and spelling. Many pupils who join the school are behind with their reading. Staff enable them to catch up quickly. The parents and carers with whom we spoke told us that they were pleased with how well their children are learning to read.
- You ensure that careers education, information, advice and guidance are central to all aspects of the curriculum. The pupils with whom we spoke said that teachers support them well to apply for post-16 courses that meet their aspirations. Despite the challenges of current restrictions, you have ensured that pupils in Year 11 are well prepared for the next stages of education, training or employment. They are continuing to study their usual subjects and courses.
- Staff provide a tailored curriculum for pupils with an EHC plan, often working with these pupils on a one-to-one basis. You make sure that these pupils and others with SEND who are working at home receive the same standard of education as their peers. You work effectively with multi-agencies to support pupils' needs.
- You and other leaders keep the management committee well informed about improvements to the school, including to the curriculum. Governors regularly

check on the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve pupils' learning. They also check that the curriculum is effective in enabling pupils in Year 11 to access appropriate education, employment or training when they leave key stage 4.

- You benefit from the support provided by the local authority, and the support that is available through a local network of schools. This has helped you and other leaders to prioritise the key actions required to improve education further for pupils. For example, you have benefited from the challenge and support provided by a local multi-academy trust. This has enabled you to make positive changes to the curriculum.

### **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. During the inspection, we spoke with you and other leaders; pupils; staff; parents; representatives of the management committee, including the chair of governors; a representative of the local authority; and representatives from a local multi-academy trust, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We considered the documentation provided. We looked at curriculum plans. We reviewed minutes from the meetings of the management committee. We also looked at samples of pupils' work. There were insufficient responses recorded on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to analyse. We also considered the 13 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cheshire East local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Claire Cropper  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**