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21 April 2021

Jules Taylor  
Headteacher  
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Shropshire  
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Dear Ms Taylor

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Woodlands School**

Following my remote inspection with Deb Jenkins, 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 have serious weaknesses.

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 have serious weaknesses at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in November 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 action to:

- develop a whole school-based approach to reading that broadens pupils' experiences and fosters a love of reading
- continue to work with parents and carers to improve the attendance of pupils who are regularly absent, so that they are in school, learning well and making better progress.

### **Context**

- Since the last inspection, two teachers, two higher level teaching assistants and two teaching assistants have left the school. Two teachers and one teaching assistant have been appointed.
- Between the start of January 2021 and the beginning of March, approximately 45% of pupils were educated at home.
- At the time of this inspection, 65% of pupils are being educated on site. Several pupils are in the process of moving from part-time to full-time attendance.

### **Main findings**

- Since the last inspection, subject leaders have improved the curriculum in the areas for which they have responsibility. Some adaptations have been made to the curriculum because of COVID-19 restrictions. However, leaders say that they have thought carefully about this. Now that pupils have returned to school, some subjects are doing more practical work, particularly in science and art.
- Leaders told us that teachers are using the school's new assessment system to identify gaps in the curriculum or gaps in pupils' learning effectively. Pupils who have not attended school regularly, or pupils who did not engage in remote education during the pandemic, have fallen behind the most. Leaders are addressing this.
- Leaders continue to review the curriculum. As a result, they have added more subjects to the curriculum, such as motor vehicle mechanics. Leaders say this will increase pupils' motivation to learn. Leaders plan to develop the curriculum further by including more challenging qualifications, such as English literature.
- Reading is beginning to have a greater focus in school. Pupils have received continuity in the teaching of phonics throughout the pandemic. Staff encourage pupils to read at home. Pupils can buy books that are of interest from the school library. However, the school lacks a whole-school agreed approach to reading. Pupils do not get the chance to listen to stories read by

adults. Their exposure to books depends on their tutor's individual approach to reading. Pupils tend to choose books they are familiar with. This restricts their experiences of different styles of text.

- Leaders say that they are making sure that pupils and their families get the extra support they need. The setting up of multi-agency meetings means that pupils and their families get this help quickly. For some, this is helping them to improve their attendance.
- All pupils at the school have an education, health and care plan. Pupils have a wide range of social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils are being supported by the school in a number of ways. This includes sessions with the school counsellor or time spent with the therapy dog. Pupils say this helps them when they are having a bad day.
- Pupils in Year 11 are well prepared for the next stage in their education or employment and training. Support for pupils over recent months has included interviews with the careers adviser, practising interview techniques and help with employment and college applications. As a result, most pupils in Year 11 have an appropriate plan in place for September. Pupils are ambitious for what they can achieve.
- Leaders use a blended approach to their remote education offer. This includes live lessons, pre-recorded lessons, work packs and the use of online packages. Staff told us that learning in this way has been a positive experience for some pupils. For example, it has reduced anxiety levels for pupils who find face-to-face learning difficult. Leaders say that these arrangements will continue if pupils need to work at home at any point in the future.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They act as the school's critical friend, offering an appropriate balance of challenge and support. Challenge to leaders has included the level of pupils' attendance, engagement in remote education, and how leaders are supporting staff's well-being. Governors are confident in leaders' ability to move the school forward.
- The school works closely with the multi-academy trust (MAT) that they plan to join in the summer term. Effective support is being given to leaders by the MAT in the development of the new curriculum and in how to improve attendance and behaviour. The local authority continues to support and challenge the school. Support has included helping the school to make the school site more secure. Challenge has included reducing the number of pupils attending off-site alternative provision. Consequently, from September, the school will not be using off-site alternative provision for long-term placements.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, pupils, those responsible for governance, representatives of the local authority and a representative of the MAT the school plans to join, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also scrutinised governing body minutes, listened to pupils read and looked at information about remote education and the curriculum. We looked at responses to our online questionnaire, Parent View, including six free-text responses, and 23 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 Shropshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Yates  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**