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Melanie Keating
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Dear Miss Keating

Additional, monitoring inspection of Hunters Hill College

Following my inspection with Martin Pye, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 2 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 special measures.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, most of Ofsted's monitoring inspections are being carried out remotely. This inspection, however, took place on site due to significant concerns about safeguarding, and leadership and management.

The inspection took place because the school was judged to require special measures at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in September 2019.

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 not taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.

Safeguarding is ineffective.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- urgently improve safeguarding arrangements by ensuring staff frequently check on all pupils' welfare, whereabouts and engagement with learning
- make sure pupils' behaviour and engagement allows learning to take place, the curriculum to be delivered effectively and all pupils to be well prepared for their move to another school, college or workplace at the end of this academic year
- help everyone in the school community to work together in the best interests of pupils to meet their education, health and care needs.

Context

- Many staff have left the school since the last monitoring inspection in January 2020. Due to the imminent closure of the school, many of these have not been replaced. The deputy headteacher retired in June and was replaced with an interim in September 2020. An assistant headteacher left in March 2020. An interim associate senior leader was appointed in September 2020. An interim executive board (IEB) took over governance of the school in February 2020. The interim headteacher is leaving at the end of this term.
- All pupils had to be educated remotely at some point during the autumn term 2020. This is because the school was closed for two fifths of this period due to serious building defects and other health and safety issues.
- Currently, just under a fifth of pupils are attending on site. As this is a special school, all pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- Leaders are currently managing significant staffing issues related to working conditions and staff conduct. One member of staff is currently absent due to COVID-19. There has been a significant number of agency staff.

Main findings

- Since the previous inspection, the school has faced many challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout this time, leaders' attempts to improve the school have had limited success. Staff and leaders hold opposing views about how the school should be run and have been unable to agree on a way forward. Consequently, communication and trust have broken down. This has damaged morale and had a negative impact on the level of care and education provided. Safeguarding remains ineffective.
- Currently, the curriculum offer does not meet pupils' needs. Pupils attending school are supervised and given tasks to do. However, staff frequently halt or change lessons because they are unable to get pupils to engage with learning. Some staff spend more time trying to manage pupils' behaviour than

they do supporting learning. In other cases, staff let pupils do what they want and have low expectations of pupils' learning.

- Staff have been setting work for pupils to do at home by posting it on the school's website. Teachers have not consistently aligned this work with the school's usual curriculum. The quality of the set work is often poor. Teachers provide little guidance to pupils on what they are expected to complete. Until very recently, staff had no way of checking if pupils were doing this work. This is because there were no reliable routines in place for pupils to share their work or receive feedback from staff.
- This half term, the school started to use an online platform that allows teachers to interact with pupils. However, currently its use is limited to pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' engagement with remote education through this platform is very low. In English and science, for example, hardly any pupils have uploaded work, so staff still do not know how well most pupils are getting on. Pupils say that they do very little or no work when they are supposed to be learning at home. This lack of interest in work stems from some teachers' low expectations and failure to set work that is well matched to pupils' needs.
- Senior leaders have put considerable effort into ensuring that pupils' EHC plans are reviewed and updated in preparation for an impending change of placement. However, delays within Birmingham local authority mean that many pupils have still not had the revisions made to their EHC plans. Leaders' time is being consumed in trying to get the local authority to take action.
- The interim headteacher has taken decisive action to address some of the concerns around staff's inappropriate use of physical intervention to control pupils. Despite these improvements, safeguarding arrangements remain ineffective. Staff make telephone calls to check on pupils' welfare and whereabouts. However, these routines for contacting pupils at home are not frequent or rigorous enough. This means that, in some cases, staff have not spoken with vulnerable pupils for several weeks.
- Members of the IEB are informed and realistic about the school's current performance. They are frustrated by the lack of effective action from the local authority and other agencies to support the school. This term, the IEB has stepped up its level of challenge about this. They accept that with more foresight leaders may have been better placed to provide meaningful remote education earlier. They know that pupils are not getting the support, care and education that they deserve.
- The impact of external support has been patchy. A safeguarding review carried out by an independent school adviser has been helpful in starting to shape practice. On the other hand, some planned external input has been derailed by ongoing staffing matters. In some cases, school improvement

visits have been cancelled or meetings missed because of the many demands on leaders' time and attention.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted on site. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, members of the interim executive board, a representative of the local authority and two priority partners from the school's commissioned school improvement service to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also carried out remote 'visits' to lessons, reviewed documents relating to behaviour and safeguarding, and examined the remote education provided on the school's website. We looked at the 21 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaires. There were too few responses to our online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View to generate a report. There were no free-text responses.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Hill
Senior Her Majesty's Inspector