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Dear Miss Ashworth

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Eden School

Following my remote inspection with Will Smith, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 25 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 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 further action to:

- ensure that subject curriculums identify the precise knowledge that teachers intend pupils to learn.

Context

- Eden School is a specialist school for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities relating to social, emotional and mental health. All pupils meet the Department for Education's definition of vulnerable. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The chair of governors retired in December 2019 and new a chair was appointed in January 2020.
- Just over half of pupils were educated at home before the school reopened to all pupils in the spring term 2020.
- At the time of this inspection, all pupils were attending on site.

Main findings

- Since the start of the pandemic, teachers have followed the usual curriculum. You have closely monitored the learning and well-being of the minority of pupils who learned remotely during this period. In most cases, staff have been able to quickly encourage all pupils to return to school. As a result of your actions, there has been minimal disruption to pupils' education, despite the current challenging circumstances.
- Before March 2020, you and other leaders replanned the curriculum. You increased the breadth and ambition of subject curriculums. These curriculums match the scope of the national curriculum more closely than they did previously. In some subjects, you have thought carefully about what you want pupils to learn and the order in which they should learn it. This is evident, for example, in the mathematics curriculum and some aspects of the English and personal, social, health and economic education curriculums. However, other subject leaders have given less thought to the precise content they intend for pupils to learn.
- Upon the return of all pupils to school, you and other leaders did not think it was necessary to make significant changes to the curriculum. This is because the vast majority of pupils continued to learn what was intended whether they were studying at home or in school during the spring term 2021. That said, teachers are carrying out checks on what pupils have remembered of their learning and, where necessary, they are making changes to the planned curriculum. For example, pupils now learn about different elements of punctuation and grammar through the topics that they study in English.

These refinements are helping pupils to refresh earlier learning and to know more.

- You have raised the profile of reading and, as a result, pupils in all key stages read regularly. Staff provide extra support to pupils who find reading difficult. The teaching of phonics is improving pupils' understanding of letters and the sounds they represent. You have also supported families to teach aspects of phonics to those pupils who have had to work from home.
- Pupils in Year 11 have had careers interviews to advise them on the range of options available to them when they leave the school. Staff also help these pupils to prepare for their next move. For example, staff have accompanied pupils as they visit colleges. All pupils who left the school at the end of the last school year moved to an appropriate destination. All current Year 11 pupils also have an appropriate destination lined up for when they leave.
- The special educational needs coordinator has increased the support for pupils' emotional health and well-being during the pandemic. Pupils now benefit from additional, targeted support in this area. For example, leaders work closely with a specialist team from the local authority. These measures have helped to reduce the levels of anxiety that pupils have felt over the last 12 months. Staff have continued to work closely with parents and carers. Several parents and pupils told us that being part of the school has had a hugely beneficial impact on pupils and their family.
- Governors have continued to meet throughout the pandemic. They have high expectations for pupils and are clear about their role in supporting and challenging leaders. Governors are knowledgeable about the improvements being made at the school, including to the curriculum.
- The trust has supported the development of both middle and senior leadership. They have invested in enhancing classrooms, which has consequently improved pupils' learning and behaviour. Training for subject leaders and links with external partners are raising staff's ambitions for pupils. Networking opportunities are a source of practical guidance for teachers. This allows some leaders to draw on a wide range of expertise, including advice from specialist leaders of education and examples of best practice to secure improvements.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, the multi-academy trust chief executive officer, pupils, staff, two representatives of those responsible for governance and two representatives of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also reviewed videos of pupils reading. We looked at seven responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including three free-text responses, and 25 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the Education Partnership Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Blackburn with Darwin. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hunter
Her Majesty's Inspector