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Tuesday Rhodes
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Rhodes

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Sheffield Inclusion Centre

Following my remote inspection with Tracey Ralph, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 18 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 three 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:

- strengthen the reading curriculum, making sure that there is a single system of phonics in which staff are adequately trained, so that there is a coherent approach to reading
- ensure that teachers use the right type of assessment at the right time so that the information that they gather is consistently useful
- put in place an effective system for gathering and considering the views of staff.

Context

- Since the last inspection, two members of the senior team have left. New appointments were made, including a new deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers. The interim chair of the management committee, the body responsible for governance in pupil referral units (PRUs), is due to be replaced by a permanent chair.
- Approximately 35% of pupils were educated at home when the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term. Just under 70% of pupils with education, health and care plans were attending on site.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately 65% of pupils were attending on site. A very small proportion of pupils were being educated remotely due to a reluctance to return to school due to COVID-19.
- At the time of this inspection, a very small proportion of staff were absent due to COVID-19. Leaders were managing this by sharing responsibilities among staff.

Main findings

- On your appointment in September 2019, you introduced a new curriculum. You prioritised the need to 'hook' those pupils who were stubbornly absent back into education. You introduced vocational subjects such as horticulture, construction and catering. Partly as a result, you have increased the rate of attendance markedly, despite the effects of the pandemic.
- As the school is a PRU, all pupils have been invited to attend school throughout the periods of national restrictions. Pupils' attendance on site has been broadly the same whether there has been a period of lockdown or not. As a result, your curriculum has been largely the same as that of before the pandemic. You have had to make some adaptations where COVID-19 restrictions limit what is possible, such as aspects of practical subjects like construction. However, pupils in Year 11, for example, are progressing largely as planned on their 'professional pathways' curriculum.

- In the primary phase, you have introduced a 'skills' rather than a 'content' curriculum. This is because pupils arrive having studied different content at their mainstream schools, and you cannot be certain how long pupils will stay. However, staff have an inconsistent understanding of what 'skills' and 'content' mean. So, although it is well-intentioned, the delivery and impact of the primary curriculum is currently varied.
- To help identify gaps in pupils' learning, you have introduced a range of baseline assessments. This includes testing what pupils know about different subjects when they arrive, and a system for measuring the results of these assessments. Staff have an inconsistent understanding of what particular types of assessment are actually checking. Furthermore, the criteria used to grade all assessments are a mixture of descriptors drawn from a range of criteria sources. As a result, the usefulness of the assessment information is limited.
- Many pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Your most vulnerable pupils are supported in the 'nurture' group. There are close ties with appropriate external agencies, especially to support pupils with their social, emotional and mental health needs.
- You have various strategies in place to support pupils with their reading. However, there is no senior leadership oversight of the plans. As a result, there is a patchwork of unrelated reading schemes in place. This sometimes leads to a mismatch of books between schemes, in particular for weaker readers. Staff are not sufficiently trained in a single system of phonics, so the support for the very weakest readers is limited in its effectiveness.
- You explained to us how difficult it has been to engage absent pupils in remote education, both during the periods of national lockdown and currently. However, you did provide, and are providing, remote education to those pupils who wish to access it. For example, we spoke with secondary pupils – who are a credit to the school – who described to us the blended remote learning provision of 'live' lessons and independent study.
- Pre-pandemic, the management committee worked with you to develop your curriculum, especially in relation to improving pupils' access to accreditation at key stage 4. Although committee members have supported and challenged leaders in various aspects of the school's work, they did not push leaders on curriculum decisions taken during the pandemic effectively. It is intended that this will change when the new chair of governors is in post.
- In the staff questionnaire, a notable number of staff expressed concerns about workload expectations. The management committee does not have an effective system in place to routinely gather and consider the views of staff.

- The local authority is aware that the number of single-registered pupils on roll is too high. Currently, there is no local authority representation on the management committee to assist the committee in supporting and challenging leaders' curriculum decisions.

Evidence

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

We also met leaders with responsibility for pupils' reading and for pupils with SEND. We met the school's leaders for safeguarding. Additionally, we met staff with leadership responsibility at two of the school's 'bases' located away from the Spring Lane site. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 13 free-text responses, and 42 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Shaw
Her Majesty's Inspector