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Dear Mr Hedge

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of The Macclesfield Academy

Following my remote inspection with Linda Emmett, 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 March 2020.

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:

- develop all subject curriculum plans so that teachers have absolute clarity about the essential knowledge that they should teach in order for pupils to learn and remember more over time.

Context

- Since the last inspection, two governors have left the school and two have joined. Three teachers have left the school and four have joined. The school business manager left the school in November 2020. You will retire at the end of the spring term and a new headteacher has been appointed to take up post at the start of the summer term.
- A little over one in ten pupils were educated at school in the spring term, when the school was closed to most pupils. About half of those pupils identified as vulnerable, and just under one half of those pupils with an education, health and care plan, were educated on site during that time.
- About nine in ten pupils were attending school at the time of this inspection. A very small proportion of pupils were self-isolating and being educated remotely.
- A very small proportion of staff were self-isolating at the time of this inspection.

Main findings

- Leaders and governors have taken appropriate actions to address the weaknesses in the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9. These pupils now benefit from a curriculum that matches the breadth and ambition of the national curriculum. Leaders and governors are also taking the necessary steps to put a new, ambitious curriculum in place for pupils in Years 10 and 11. As a result, pupils who enter Year 10 in September 2021 will embark on a key stage 4 curriculum that builds on the knowledge that they have gained in key stage 3.
- Senior leaders and subject leaders are working together to map out the subject content to meet the ambition of the new curriculum. Leaders are ensuring that this content is appropriately informed by the expectations of the national curriculum. However, some subjects are further ahead than others. Currently, there is more to do to make sure that all subject plans provide teachers with sufficient detail about the knowledge that pupils are expected to learn.
- Leaders and teachers have not been distracted from providing pupils with an appropriate education in the current circumstances. Teachers have a comprehensive picture of the knowledge that they have not been able to

deliver over the last year. They are reordering units of work so that pupils can cover the essential subject content that has been missed.

- Teachers are using an appropriate range of assessments to check pupils' learning. Through these checks, teachers are starting to form a thorough picture of what pupils know and remember of their prior learning. Senior leaders are beginning to support subject leaders in how to use these findings to make informed decisions about what pupils need to learn next.
- You and other staff provide pupils with suitable opportunities to read regularly. You ensure that pupils' reading abilities are comprehensively assessed. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 who are at the earliest stages of learning to read benefit from specialist support to improve their phonic knowledge. Staff provide effective support for other pupils who need to strengthen their reading, vocabulary and comprehension.
- Pupils in Year 7 told us that they have settled back into school well. They feel confident to ask for any further support if they need it. Teachers are providing Year 11 pupils with helpful opportunities to identify what they know and remember about their GCSE courses. These pupils have also benefited from virtual careers events and individual careers advice. Pupils said that they feel well equipped to make important choices about their next steps in education, employment or training.
- Pupils who are learning remotely are well supported. These pupils engage in activities that cover the same knowledge as pupils who are learning in school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who are learning from home benefit from additional support from a specialist tutor.
- Over the last year, staff have maintained regular contact with the families of pupils who are vulnerable and pupils with SEND. Staff have made good use of this contact to successfully encourage these pupils to attend school. Staff have done what they can to help these pupils return to school. Leaders have ensured that pupils with SEND have appropriate access to the support that they usually receive, including support for their well-being.
- The governing body has worked closely and productively with you and other leaders throughout the pandemic. They have a clear understanding of the actions required to improve the curriculum. Governors have kept a close eye on the actions that leaders have taken to provide an education in the current circumstances.
- A local trust has provided valuable support and challenge for senior leaders. This is helping leaders to address the weaknesses in the curriculum and manage the challenges brought about by the pandemic. This trust is also supporting some subject leaders to review and strengthen the content of their curriculums.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with you and other senior leaders to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils under the current circumstances. We spoke with members of the governing body, including a representative of the academy trust. We also spoke with groups of middle leaders, teachers and pupils.

We examined curriculum plans and records of the meetings of the governing body. We considered 36 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. We also took account of the 64 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the comments received by Ofsted's free-text facility.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees of The Macclesfield Academy single-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cheshire East. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pennington
Her Majesty's Inspector