

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



27 April 2021

Paul Collin
Headteacher
City Academy Norwich
299 Bluebell Road
Norwich
Norfolk
NR4 7LP

Dear Mr Collin

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of City Academy Norwich

Following my remote inspection with Liz Smith, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 16 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 June 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:

- make sure pupils whose participation in remote education was low, attend school regularly and are helped to catch up quickly
- ensure the curriculum, particularly in key stage 3, is of equivalent breadth to the national curriculum.

Context

- Since the previous inspection of the school, there have been two changes to the senior leadership team, including the appointment of an acting deputy headteacher. The school is in the process of joining Bohunt Education Trust (BET). The trust has been providing support to the school since September 2017.
- When the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term, 93% of pupils were educated at home. Nearly 55% of vulnerable pupils attended school, including just under 50% of pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- At the time of the inspection, 96% of pupils were attending on site. A small number of pupils have not been able to return to school for reasons related to COVID-19.

Main findings

- You have made progress on the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. For example, you have started to adopt new curriculum plans provided by BET. You have developed systems to assess pupils' understanding. There is more still to do. For instance, while you have developed the teaching of literacy, the partial closure of schools delayed training for staff about how best to teach pupils to read. You have plans in place to continue improving provision.
- At the time of the previous inspection, too many pupils were absent regularly. You succeeded in increasing levels of attendance prior to the first national lockdown, but were disappointed by the number of pupils who participated in remote education when the school was only partially open. During the third national lockdown, you created a new timetable. 'Live' lessons over video conferencing were shorter than lessons in school. You monitored 'screen time' to prevent pupils becoming tired and added well-being sessions in the afternoon. Staff spoke with families regularly. These actions helped to increase pupils' participation rates.
- Despite these actions, some pupils did not engage well enough with their learning. Teachers are now helping pupils who missed online lessons to catch up in school. However, a small number of pupils who did not attend remote

lessons have also not returned to school. These pupils are mostly in Years 10 and 11. They are falling further behind.

- During the period of remote education, teachers used a range of strategies, including quizzes and written work, to check what pupils had learned. Teachers guided pupils on how to improve their work. As a result, most pupils continued to learn.
- Teachers are now checking how well pupils have remembered what they were taught. This is giving teachers the information they need to make future changes to what pupils are taught. For pupils in Year 11, your main aim is to consolidate what pupils have already learned.
- Some individuals currently have to work away from school. They are set work to complete online. Teachers mark this work and contact pupils regularly to prevent them from falling behind. You have plans in place to make such arrangements for others, if any 'bubble' of pupils has to isolate owing to a COVID-19 outbreak.
- You give staff the information they need to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). You check how well teachers use this information. You adapted this approach so that it was effective remotely. For example, staff contacted the homes of pupils with SEND to find out what was and was not working well. They shared this information with teachers, enabling teachers to provide pupils with appropriate support.
- Your key stage 3 curriculum runs through Years 7 and 8. Pupils in these year groups are not taught computing. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to explore foreign languages before selecting whether to continue their study in Year 9. The range of subjects taught, particularly at key stage 3, is not commensurate with the national curriculum.
- Governors' monitoring of the school has continued uninterrupted through the pandemic. They still meet regularly, online. They have focused on the priorities of the school, such as improving attendance. They challenge leaders through questioning and follow up on issues they have discussed previously. They hold leaders to account well.
- BET is an important partner to the school. Trust leaders behave as if the school already belongs to the trust. They allocate financial support, for example, to support the education of disadvantaged pupils through the pandemic. Trust leaders provide expertise and guidance in devising new curriculum plans. They work closely with school leaders in developing quality assurance systems and making sure teachers' assessments of pupils' work are accurate. Much of the current work of the school is underpinned by the systems and expertise of the trust.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other leaders of the school, the chief executive officer and leaders of BET, pupils, staff and the chair of the governing body to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also reviewed minutes of meetings of the governing body. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 34 free-text responses, and 53 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Hemmings
Her Majesty's Inspector