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James Bradley
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Dear Mr Bradley

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Bury Secondary PRU Spring Lane School

Following my remote inspection with Jonathan Smart, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) and Adam Sproston (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 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:

- ensure that governors maintain a secure oversight of curriculum developments
- ensure that governors hold leaders more fully to account for the impact of their work to improve the school
- strengthen the personal development curriculum across key stage 4.

Context

- Bury Secondary PRU Spring Lane School is a specialist provider for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Many of the pupils have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. The school operates across three sites. The largest school site is in Radcliffe. The other two are in Bury (Milltown House and Park House). The school caters for pupils aged 11 to 16.
- You joined the school as the new headteacher in January 2021. A new senior leader, with responsibility for pupils' behaviour, attitudes and welfare, has also been appointed since the last inspection.
- All pupils who attend this school are vulnerable. Approximately two thirds of pupils were educated at home when the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term. Almost three tenths of pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan were educated at home at this time.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately two thirds of pupils were attending school on site. No pupils were continuing their education remotely.
- One senior leader remains on long-term absence and this role is being covered temporarily. A small proportion of staff are currently shielding from COVID-19 at home and their positions are being covered by temporary staff.

Main findings

- Curriculum development has been hampered by the pandemic and also by governors' search for the new headteacher. Leaders, under your direction, are beginning to reconstruct the curriculum in all key stages. There is a key focus to ensure that the curriculum meets pupils' individual needs. You and other leaders provided an appropriate remote education offer during the third national lockdown and many pupils continued their education on site. This has helped pupils to get back on track with their learning, now that the school is open to all pupils.
- The school has only very recently opened for all pupils to attend on site. Staff are therefore in the early stages of finding out what pupils know and have

remembered of their previous learning. As such, adaptations to the curriculum, to help pupils make up for lost ground, are also in the early stages. You and teachers are paying close attention to Year 11 pupils who are due to move on to other education, employment or training at the end of this school year. Staff, including those in alternative providers, have adapted the curriculum for these pupils to ensure that the most essential knowledge is prioritised. This is so pupils have the best chance to meet entry requirements for the next phase of their learning or employment.

- Staff know pupils very well. For instance, staff make frequent checks on the well-being of those vulnerable pupils who are currently not attending school. Staff offer helpful guidance to support pupils' personal development when required. In most parts of the school, there is a coherent and consistent curriculum to strengthen pupils' personal development, but this is not currently the case across key stage 4.
- The biggest impact of your work has been in key stage 3. The reorganisation of daily timetables and the introduction of a new reward scheme have led to significant improvements in pupils' engagement in learning and behaviour. Key stage 3 pupils are now better placed for success in the academic curriculum.
- Reading is a key priority, particularly in key stage 3. Staff undertake regular checks on pupils' reading to assess for any gaps in their reading skills and knowledge. Pupils receive additional, bespoke lessons where required to help build their understanding of the subject, including their grasp of phonics. Leaders have invested in quality texts which are accessible to pupils who struggle with reading and these have helped to develop pupils' enjoyment of this subject.
- Leaders ensured that partnership with other agencies and professionals continued during the third national lockdown. Consequently, EHC plans were reviewed, allowing pupils' needs to be met. Pupils with EHC plans and those pupils who are looked after are well supported, whether they attend on site or at alternative providers. Key targets in pupils' EHC plans are shared with all staff. Staff therefore fully understand pupils' needs and how they can best support pupils to be ready to learn. This ensures that the vast majority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) move successfully into their next phase of learning or employment when they leave the school.
- Governors have stabilised staffing, including your appointment as headteacher. They ensured that remote education was implemented during the national lockdowns and monitored pupils' engagement in this learning. However, governors do not have a sufficiently strategic overview of the curriculum and its development. They have not challenged you and other

leaders sufficiently around the breadth and impact of the curriculum in all key stages. This includes the personal development curriculum in key stage 4.

- The local authority provides effective support to you and other leaders. This includes assistance with funding, the brokering of support from a local multi-academy trust and your successful induction as the new headteacher. The local authority has ensured that you continue to receive a comprehensive programme of support in these early days of your tenure. This support has allowed you to think carefully about the core purpose and vision for the school which will be a fundamental part of your approach to building the new curriculum. There are early signs of impact, for example, in the improvements made within key stage 3.

Evidence

During the inspection, we spoke with: you and other senior leaders; pupils; staff; parents; representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors; representatives of the local authority and a representative from a local multi-academy trust. We also spoke to a leader in a local school and staff from alternative providers who co-educate some of your pupils to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We considered the documentation provided. We looked at curriculum plans. We reviewed minutes from meetings of the governing body. We took into account the seven responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 26 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Hardman
Her Majesty's Inspector