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28 April 2021

Alice Middleton  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Middleton

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Rufford Primary School**

Following my remote inspection with Mark Howes, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 30 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 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:

- provide subject leaders with training that supports them in their work to develop ambitious, well-sequenced curriculum plans in foundation subjects
- develop curriculum plans in foundation subjects that set out the crucial knowledge to be taught, and when, so that pupils build up knowledge in a meaningful and logical way
- put computing back on the curriculum as soon as it is practically possible to do so.

### **Context**

- Since the previous inspection, many new governors have been appointed, including the current chair of the governing body. One teacher has left. The school's senior leadership team remains unchanged. The school is due to join Invictus Education Trust, a multi-academy trust (MAT), on 1 September 2021.
- Between January and the 5 March 2021, the proportion of pupils attending on-site learning in school rose from 28% at the start of term to 37% by the beginning of March. Most pupils who have an education, health and care plan or are identified as being vulnerable continued to attend school during this time.
- Over the past 12 months, a significant proportion of staff have had short-term absences for COVID-19 related reasons.
- At the time of this inspection, a small number of pupils were being educated remotely because of COVID-19.

### **Main findings**

- Before the pandemic, school leaders had started to improve the school's curriculum. They had adopted new approaches for planning and teaching reading and mathematics. Some staff training had taken place, and more was planned. Teachers had also begun thinking about ways to develop curriculum planning in other subjects.
- Following the first national lockdown, which started in March 2020, further school improvement action was paused. Consequently, some much-needed staff training has been delayed by the pandemic. Looking to the immediate future, further training to support subject leaders in shaping ambitious curriculum plans is an urgent priority.
- During this year's spring term partial closure, the school's remote education offer provided all the usual subjects. However, the content in foundation subjects, such as history, geography and art, changed. When studying the

Vikings in history, for example, teachers provided pupils with information and activities that were different from usual. Staff report that pupils have returned to school with varying levels of knowledge. In part, this is because of varied levels of engagement with remote learning. Another factor is that the school's curriculum plans in foundation subjects do not set out the crucial knowledge that pupils should be taught at different stages of their education. This means that new learning does not build logically on what has gone before. Pupils are kept occupied and enjoy tasks, but they do not learn all that they need to know.

- In English and mathematics, the curriculum is more structured, with clearer expectations about what pupils need to learn and when. In reading, leaders have refreshed the school's stock of reading books, and adopted a systematic way of teaching phonics. This is helpful. Similarly, in mathematics, staff follow an agreed approach and use the same bank of resources. In both these subjects, this organised approach enabled staff to provide a logical sequence of lessons through remote education. Even so, the school's recent checks on pupils' learning and progress have revealed that there is still ground to make up, particularly in mathematics where pupils' knowledge of place value and computation has declined. In response, leaders have organised additional support. This usually takes place in small groups or in one-to-one sessions outside of the main class.
- When the school first reopened on 8 March 2021, staff organised activities to settle pupils back into school life. By using the on-site forest school area and providing more outdoor activities than usual, staff helped pupils get used to being together again. For the first two weeks, pupils' physical activity, well-being and enjoyment of school were prioritised, and the usual timetable was relaxed. Pupils say that they appreciated this and found it helpful. At the time of this inspection, staff were continuing to encourage physical fitness by putting on extra lunchtime activities led by a sports teacher.
- Currently, pupils are studying their usual subjects apart from computing. The school has a computer suite that is not being used because of COVID-19 restrictions. Leaders plan to restart this subject soon by using portable computer equipment and other resources to support teaching.
- During the partial closure, pupils with special educational needs continued to receive bespoke support. Input from specialist agencies varied in its availability and format but services are almost back to normal. Many pupils with particular needs continued to attend school throughout the partial closure, so they benefited from in-school attention and expertise. This helped them to keep up with their learning.
- Local authority staff have brokered some external support and facilitated a local headteachers' group. School leaders have found this useful.

- The governing body is informed about its role. Governors are supportive of the staff and mindful of their well-being, but also know that the quality of education needs to improve. In preparation for joining Invictus Education MAT, governors have liaised with MAT staff. The chair has attended meetings to gather information about ways of working. Governors believe that joining the MAT will provide additional momentum for school improvement.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, teaching staff, pupils, a local authority representative, and two governors, including the chair, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at information on the school's website, curriculum plans, action plans and information supplied by a subject leader. We observed a reading session. We considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including seven free-text responses, and 16 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**