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Nicola White
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Dear Ms White

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Christ's College

Following my remote inspection with Jayne Ashman, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 23 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 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:

- develop the curriculum so that it meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
- ensure that all pupils in the early stages of learning to read get the help they require to catch up
- ensure that subject leaders are held to account for their curriculum choices and plans.

Context

- Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in leadership. The current principal joined the school in November 2020. An assistant vice-principal and secondary mathematics leader joined the school in January 2020. In January 2021, a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) was appointed following a period of interim cover provided by another school in the trust. Two governors joined the school improvement board last year.
- Throughout the spring term, approximately two thirds of pupils were learning at home. Around one half of vulnerable pupils and a third of pupils with an education, health and care plan were attending on site.
- At the time of this inspection, almost all pupils were attending school. Only a very small minority of pupils were absent due to COVID-19.

Main findings

- You have worked hard to develop your remote learning arrangements during the spring term. You provided as many laptops as you could to pupils that needed them. You have trained staff in the use of technology so that they have the skills to deliver remote lessons to pupils. Teachers have used assessment information to identify pupils in need of extra help. You provided this remotely through extra sessions with teachers.
- You continue to deliver the curriculum remotely for pupils who need to self-isolate. Daily alerts to teachers let them know which pupils are learning remotely. Work is then uploaded and you make daily checks on pupils' well-being.
- In the last year, you have led a thorough review of your curriculum plans. New long- and medium-term plans are now in place that identify the knowledge that you want pupils to learn. You are reviewing your curriculum leadership arrangements so that responsibility for checking the impact of your curriculum is shared. Another school in the trust is helping you to develop curriculum leadership roles.

- You have used a range of approaches to check what pupils have learned during the spring term. In subjects such as English and mathematics, you are using test papers to check pupils' understanding. You are selective in the way you use GCSE content so that the checks on learning provide the information that teachers need to plan future lessons. In subjects other than English and mathematics, teachers assess pupils' knowledge. For example, 'make it stick' questions help teachers to check pupils' understanding of key content.
- You have introduced a new reading programme for pupils who are learning to read. The books these pupils read match the sounds they already know. You have provided training for all adults so that they have the knowledge and skills to support pupils in the early stages of learning to read. Following the return of all pupils to school, you have used phonics assessments to check what pupils have remembered. You provide phonics support for younger pupils through one-to-one reading sessions with teaching assistants. However, this support is not yet available to older pupils who may need it. Form tutors listen to secondary-aged pupils read every day.
- Year 11 pupils have been well supported by their teachers. Pupils have accessed their usual curriculum throughout the period of national restrictions. Form tutors and teaching assistants have helped to keep pupils' learning on track. Pupils told inspectors that they value the 'homely environment' that the school provides and that it helps them to feel safe.
- You have increased the amount of time that primary teachers spend teaching mathematics. You have focused on calculation skills and mathematical fluency because assessments have told you that this was an area where progress over the spring term had slowed.
- You have reviewed the way in which you support pupils with SEND. You have rightly identified pupils with SEND for interventions to help them catch up. The newly appointed SENCo is beginning to work with teachers to improve provision for these pupils. This work is still in its early stages. You are aware that a continued focus on these pupils is required so that the need for interventions is reduced in the future.
- Trustees and governors are knowledgeable and well informed. Governors recognise that they need to create stronger links with subject leaders to gain greater insight into how the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. The composition of the school improvement board includes a senior leader from a partner school within the trust. This provides another layer of oversight on leaders' actions.
- You have worked with colleagues from another school in the trust to develop your curriculum leadership model. You have also worked with a consultant to support the work of early years leaders to improve the delivery of the curriculum.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you and your senior leadership team. We held meetings with your SENCo and primary mathematics leader. We held discussions with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust and representatives of those responsible for governance to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also met with primary and secondary pupils, and observed some pupils reading to an adult. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 43 free-text responses, and 55 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the Emmanuel Schools Foundation multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sunderland local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector