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Jackie Cooper
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Dear Ms Cooper

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of The William Allitt School

Following my remote inspection with Chris Davies, 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 at its previous section 5 inspections. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in September 2018.

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 the curriculum is ambitious in all subjects and meets all the requirements of the national curriculum
- ensure that curriculum plans precisely identify essential subject knowledge, so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are secure in their learning.

Context

- Several new leaders have joined the school since the previous inspection, including a deputy headteacher, a coordinator for SEND and a subject leader for mathematics. A new business manager has been appointed. Three governors have joined the governing body, including a new chair and a vice chair.
- Approximately nine out of ten pupils were educated at home when the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term. A similar proportion of vulnerable pupils were educated on site during this time, including around two thirds of pupils with education and health care plans.
- Currently, the vast majority of pupils are attending on site.

Main findings

- Leaders' effective actions have ensured that all pupils can access education in the current circumstances. They have anticipated the needs of pupils and staff. All pupils have been provided with a laptop computer to support their learning at school and at home. Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey are positive about the school. Staff morale is mostly positive. Most staff are proud to work at the school.
- Leaders have ensured that all pupils continue to study their usual range of subjects over the course of the pandemic. They have adjusted some aspects of the curriculum because of COVID-19. Teachers have maintained the practical aspects of learning as far as possible. In Year 8, for example, pupils received textile folders to continue with their practical learning by making a patchwork pillow. In science, experiments have been replaced with demonstrations to support pupils' learning. Leaders' curriculum plans indicate that the school is well placed to recover quickly from the recent COVID-19 restrictions.
- Leaders are keen to make sure that the curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. Subject leaders have received training on improving curriculum planning and its delivery. They have designed 'learning journeys' which consider the knowledge that pupils will acquire over time. These plans are more ambitious

in some subjects than others. Some subject curriculums do not meet the requirements of the national curriculum.

- Subject leaders have reviewed the content of their curriculum since the previous inspection. Some subject curriculums precisely identify the key knowledge pupils need to know and remember. These plans set out clearly the knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn, and when. However, some subject curriculums do not precisely identify the essential knowledge pupils need so that they are secure in their learning.
- Leaders and staff are passionate about the promotion of reading and literacy. They created a 'pop-up' library and book delivery service during the lockdown. Leaders use effective strategies to support pupils with weaker reading skills. Pupils say that the support they receive is helping them in their different subjects. World book day and other events have been used to promote reading across the school. Younger pupils have written 'from classroom to care home' letters to local care home residents throughout this time as part of leaders' citizenship and literacy programme.
- Leaders have planned further assessments to check the learning of pupils in Year 11. They have carefully considered the arrangements so that pupils can manage these assessments over the summer term. Leaders and staff have provided guidance for these pupils to ensure that they are prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.
- Leaders are ensuring that the small proportion of pupils who continue to learn at home are learning the same curriculum as their peers. These pupils continue to receive the support that they need.
- Since the previous inspection leaders have reviewed their provision for pupils with SEND. They are developing effective strategies to identify specific needs and are working with a range of external agencies to help meet these needs. Pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum as their peers. Leaders' revised approach is inclusive. They know that further adaptations are needed to support these pupils in their subjects. This improvement work has been slowed by the pandemic.
- Governance has strengthened since the last inspection. Leaders draw upon the skills that new governors have. Relationships between leaders and governors are professional and positive. Governors are kept well informed and are knowledgeable about the developments taking place. They are supportive of leaders and provide appropriate challenge. They have maintained this approach throughout the pandemic.
- Leaders have benefited from effective support provided by the local authority. The provision for pupils with SEND is beginning to improve as a result of this support. Leaders have forged close links with an external multi-academy

trust. They have accessed specific training for subject leaders to improve curriculum planning.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, a deputy headteacher and other senior leaders and subject leaders to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils in the current circumstances. We met the special educational needs coordinator and the designated leader for safeguarding. We met with leaders of reading and literacy, and careers guidance. We observed pupils in their reading. Meetings were held with three members of the governing body, including the chair, and a school improvement officer for the local authority.

We also reviewed information about the school's curriculum. We looked at 41 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 27 free-text responses, and 43 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 Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector