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26 April 2021

Gareth Jones  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Jones

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Gateacre School**

Following my remote inspection with Alyson Middlemass, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 18 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 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:

- develop subject teachers' expertise in the teaching of reading so that they can support those pupils who have fallen behind with their reading to catch up.

### **Context**

- Since March 2020, lead practitioners have been appointed in mathematics and science. A whole-school literacy coordinator and special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator have joined the school. Due to the increase in pupil numbers in Year 7 and the sixth form, several new teachers have been appointed.
- Approximately nine out of 10 pupils were educated at home when the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term. Around one half of vulnerable pupils, and about a third of pupils with an education, health and care plan, were educated on site during this period.
- At the time of this inspection, around three quarters of pupils were attending on site. This was because pupils in Years 8 and 9 were self-isolating.

### **Main findings**

- Despite the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions, pupils at Gateacre School have continued to follow their usual range of curriculum subjects throughout the pandemic. You have ensured that pupils learned well whether they were at home or in school. For example, pupils have benefited from the effective training that staff received on the delivery of remote education. As a result of this training, you and the staff put appropriate remote learning in place for all pupils when the school closed to most pupils earlier in the spring term.
- When the school reopened fully in March 2021, teachers took swift action to check what pupils knew and remembered of their learning since the start of the pandemic. While they have continued to deliver the usual curriculum, teachers are making the necessary adjustments to what is taught so that pupils can catch up quickly. The support that pupils received has helped them to settle back into school quickly and maintained the momentum of learning.
- Before the pandemic, you had successfully increased the breadth and ambition of the curriculum, particularly in key stage 3. Subject leaders had focused effectively on refining the content of their curriculums. For example, they made it clear in curriculum plans what important knowledge pupils needed to learn and in what order. Also, subject leaders ensured that pupils developed their subject-specific vocabulary well. More recently, you have renewed your focus on improving the way teachers deliver the curriculum, including remotely. Parents, carers and pupils appreciate the developments that you have made to the way the curriculum is taught.

- Pupils in Year 11 and students in Year 13 have continued to follow their usual range of examination subjects. Leaders and teachers were determined to ensure that pupils and students were not disadvantaged when working remotely. For example, teachers provided specialist resources such as art materials and equipment for pupils and students to use at home. Pupils in Year 11, and students in Year 13, have benefited from extensive careers guidance. They have had one-to-one advice and support to help them prepare for their next stages in education, employment or training.
- You have been effective in establishing a positive culture of reading across the school. Specialist teachers are effective at identifying the weakest readers. They provide support, including for those pupils with gaps in their phonic knowledge. However, some pupils are not accessing learning across the curriculum as well as they should. This, in part, is because they have fallen behind in their reading during the pandemic. Subject teachers do not have enough knowledge about how to support struggling readers to help them to catch up.
- You and other leaders have appropriately prioritised support for vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). You have kept in close contact with these pupils and their families. Leaders continue to work closely with external agencies. This is to ensure that pupils and their families receive extra help when they need it. Staff have amended the plans for all pupils with SEND. This is to reflect their changing needs because of the impact of the pandemic. These revised plans are helping teachers to better meet these pupils' needs at the current time.
- Governors have a clear oversight of the curriculum in school and the remote education that some pupils continue to receive. Governors meet remotely with you and other leaders regularly to discuss the priorities for improvement. Members of the governing body have been effective in holding you to account. They, along with you, have taken an interest in ensuring that staff workload and well-being is thoughtfully considered. You and governors have ensured that pupils receive an education during the current circumstances.
- The local authority has provided support and challenge to you and the senior leadership team. The local authority has supported you to develop subject leaders' curriculum expertise. As a result, pupils are learning and remembering more of the curriculum.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinators, pastoral leads, staff and pupils. We also spoke to governors, including the chair of the governing body and representatives of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We examined a range of documents provided by the school, including minutes of the governing body meetings and a sample of the school's curriculum plans. We looked at 39 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including the 39 free-text responses. We reviewed the 51 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 Liverpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Eastwood  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**