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Andrew Murphy  
Principal  
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Dear Mr Murphy

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of North Shore Academy**

Following my remote inspection with Jean Watt, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 17 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 October 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.**

## Context

- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of the board of trustees has been appointed. The school's leadership team has been extended. A new vice principal has been appointed and two members of staff have been promoted to assistant principal positions.
- Approximately nine out of 10 pupils were educated at home during the period of national restrictions in the spring term 2021. Around two thirds of vulnerable pupils and all pupils with an education, health and care plan attended school during this period.
- Nearly all pupils were attending school at the time of this inspection. A small number of pupils in Years 8 and 10 were self-isolating due to COVID-19.

## Main findings

- Leaders have responded well to the challenges that they have faced due to the circumstances surrounding COVID-19. Leaders and teachers carefully monitored pupils' participation in remote education during the most recent period of national restrictions. Because of this, leaders have a clear and accurate picture of what pupils currently need and the curriculum has been quickly adapted to support pupils as they return to school.
- Before the pandemic, leaders were taking action to develop the breadth of the school's curriculum. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, this work continued. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 now study the full range of national curriculum subjects. More pupils are choosing a wider range of subjects to study in Year 10 and beyond. For example, because of the development of the languages curriculum, more Year 9 pupils have chosen to continue their study of French and Spanish in Year 10.
- During the most recent period of national restrictions, pupils continued to study their usual subjects. Leaders made temporary changes to the curriculum in some subjects. For example, in mathematics, teachers delayed units of work that required mathematical equipment that pupils were unlikely to have at home. Leaders have plans in place to ensure that pupils will be taught any missed content now that they have all returned to school.
- Pupils who are unable to attend school can access all of their usual lessons remotely. Lessons in school are 'live streamed' to pupils studying from home. Teachers interact with pupils who are working remotely, giving pupils feedback on their work. Teachers have a clear view of the progress being made by pupils accessing remote education.
- Subject leaders have developed curriculum plans that are well sequenced. They have identified the key knowledge that pupils need in their subjects and pupils build on this over time. Teachers use a range of techniques to identify

any gaps in pupils' knowledge. For example, teachers use knowledge quizzes to check what pupils know and remember. These approaches are well established and used consistently across the school. Additional support is in place to ensure that pupils who have fallen behind catch up quickly.

- Work to ensure that all pupils are fluent readers is a strength of the school. Staff are well trained to deliver the school's reading programmes. Carefully selected reading programmes help younger pupils who joined the school with low attainment in reading to catch up rapidly. Year 7 pupils who receive reading support told us that they are becoming more confident and enjoy reading more.
- Leaders have prioritised support for pupils' well-being. Pupils in Year 11 access careers advice that helps them to decide their next steps when they leave school. There has been a notable increase in the number of pupils with plans to remain in education, employment or training when they leave the school. Parents and pupils appreciate the support that the school has provided.
- Leaders keep a close eye on vulnerable pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Weekly meetings are held to coordinate the support for these pupils. Leaders work with external agencies to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils get the extra help that they need. Detailed plans for pupils with SEND have been adapted so that teachers know how to support pupils when they are working from home and in school.
- Members of the academy council ask the right questions of leaders and are successful in holding them to account. This term, the academy council has focused on attendance, safeguarding and engagement in remote education, recognising these areas as priorities. Now that all pupils have returned to school, the academy council have plans to focus on how leaders are ensuring that teachers identify and address any gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- Leaders benefit from the support provided by the trust. Subject directors from the trust work closely with subject leaders in school. Together, they adapt the trust-wide curriculum model to suit the school's context. Staff told us that the trust's support has a positive impact on their workload. Leaders were full of praise for trust staff who have taken a lead in setting up lateral flow testing in school, enabling leaders to focus fully on supporting pupils' return to school.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you and other senior leaders, a range of middle leaders, the chief executive of the multi-academy trust and the chair of the academy council, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also held discussions with a group of teachers and pupils from Years 7 and 11. We considered an email from the director of children's services for Stockton-on-Tees, as well as responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 60 free-text responses, and 73 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive of the Northern Education Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Stockton-on-Tees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Graham Findlay  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**