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30 April 2021

Michael Smith  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Smith

**Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Haydon Bridge Community High School and Sports College**

Following my remote inspection with Steve Shaw, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 24 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 special measures.

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 was judged to require special measures at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in March 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:

- strengthen the strategic oversight of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and ensure that there is an agreed and timely approach to identifying pupils with SEND and providing appropriate support to meet their needs
- ensure that pupils who are not fluent readers are identified in a timely way and that appropriate support is put in place so that they catch up quickly in reading.

### **Context**

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has left the school. A new headteacher started in January 2021. A new subject leader for mathematics has been appointed. Some members of the interim executive board (IEB), which is responsible for governance, have left. Three new members of the IEB have been appointed.
- During the period of national restrictions at the start of the spring term 2021, approximately 9 out of 10 pupils were educated at home. Around a fifth of pupils identified as vulnerable attended school during this period, along with approximately half of pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- At the time of this inspection, nearly all pupils were attending school on site.

### **Main findings**

- Leaders have managed the challenges presented by the pandemic. They have prioritised pupils' well-being and provided effective support to pupils. Leaders have ensured that education for all pupils has continued despite the disruption caused by COVID-19. The curriculum has been adapted to help pupils to make a smooth return to school.
- The new headteacher has started to put ambitious curriculum plans in place. He has a clear vision about what he wants the curriculum to achieve. Staff have been trained in curriculum development. Subject leaders have identified the key knowledge that pupils need to learn in their subjects and are amending their curriculum plans accordingly.
- Leaders made some changes to the sequencing of the curriculum when most pupils were studying from home. Leaders identified content that they felt was not well suited to remote education. For example, the curriculum in mathematics has been reordered so that content that requires pupils to use specialist equipment will be taught in school. Where the curriculum has been reordered, leaders have made sure that subject knowledge is organised in a

way that ensures pupils still have the prior knowledge needed to learn new content.

- Teachers are using assessment to check pupils' new starting points. For example, pupils complete mini whiteboard tasks and quizzes so that teachers can identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Pupils are positive about this approach. They told us that teachers are taking time in lessons to give them the help that they need to catch up.
- The school provides effective academic and well-being support to pupils. Leaders are mindful that the pandemic has had an additional impact on Years 11 and 13 pupils as they prepare for examinations. Teachers provide extra after-school sessions to help these pupils with revision. Leaders also help pupils to prepare for the next stage in their education. For example, the head of sixth form has met with all Year 11 pupils to discuss their post-16 options. As a result, pupils feel well supported.
- Leaders have developed effective systems to deliver the curriculum remotely to pupils who are not in school. Leaders provide devices to those pupils who need them. All pupils can access remote education if required. A range of approaches are used, including recorded lessons and some 'live' lessons. Pupils told us that they appreciate the school's approach to remote education.
- Vulnerable pupils get the help that they need. Leaders are proactive in identifying pupils who may need help and support. Pupils who are not in school are contacted daily. When concerns arise, leaders take the appropriate action and involve external agencies.
- Where pupils have special educational needs which have been clearly identified, detailed support plans give teachers guidance on how to help pupils. Leaders actively check that teachers use this guidance in lessons. However, the processes to identify pupils with SEND are variable. In particular, systems to support transition into the school for pupils with SEND do not ensure that all pupils' needs are recognised and addressed in a timely way.
- Plans to support pupils who are not fluent readers are in the early stages of development. Leaders recognised that some pupils needed support with reading comprehension, and this has been put in place. However, effective systems are not in place to identify and support pupils who need help with phonics knowledge. This is a priority for the school.
- The IEB is effective in holding leaders to account. Members of the IEB have the expertise, knowledge and skills to support and challenge leaders. They provide effective oversight of leaders' actions. Members of the IEB ask probing questions and seek to confirm what leaders tell them. For example,

members of the IEB took steps to assure themselves of the quality of the school's remote education provision.

- The local authority provides strategic guidance to leaders. The local authority has brokered external consultants to work with leaders in school. This has facilitated improvement in curriculum development. The school benefits from this wide-ranging support.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, subject leaders, the chair of the interim executive board and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also held discussions with teachers and pupils from Years 11 and 13. We reviewed minutes of IEB meetings and considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 42 free-text responses, and 38 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Graham Findlay  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**