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Sophie Charter  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Charter

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Abbeys Woods Academy**

Following my remote inspection with Hanna Miller, 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 September 2019.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 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:

- urgently develop planning in the wider curriculum by identifying and sequencing the essential knowledge all pupils should learn
- make sure staff have the required subject knowledge to help pupils learn and do well in all subjects
- introduce the school's intended new phonics programme, ensuring all staff are well trained and that books consistently match the sounds that pupils learn.

### **Context**

- Since the last inspection, twelve members of staff have left the school, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The current headteacher was appointed in April 2020, having previously been the joint head of school from October 2019. Two class teachers have been appointed. An interim consultant special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) joined the school in March 2021. One governor has resigned, and three new governors have been appointed.
- Approximately six out of ten pupils were educated at home in the spring term, before the school re-opened to all pupils. Around half of vulnerable pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were educated on site during that time.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was open to all pupils and nearly all were attending.

### **Main findings**

- Since being appointed, the headteacher's determination for rapid and effective improvement has not been diminished by the current circumstances. Leaders and governors have ensured that pupils continue their learning in all subjects. At the start of the spring term, leaders made sure that pupils had the right technology to help them learn at home.
- Teachers have a strong understanding of those pupils who engaged well during the period of remote education and those who did not. Teachers are focusing on 're-connecting with pupils' and helping them settle back into the routines of school life. For the rest of this term, leaders are prioritising personal, social and health education, alongside teaching pupils their other subjects. As a result, pupils have made a smooth transition back to school and their attendance is high.
- In March 2020, leaders were working closely with subject specialists from the trust to review planning in some subjects, such as geography, art and English.

However, their work to review plans in other subjects has been hampered over the last year because of the pandemic. Leaders recognise that further, urgent work is necessary to identify the essential knowledge pupils need to know and the order in which it is taught. With the help of the trust, leaders are continuing to develop teachers' subject knowledge across the curriculum. This work is vital to ensure that all pupils learn well.

- Teachers are checking what pupils have learned and remembered in reading, phonics and mathematics carefully. They are using this information to provide additional teaching for those pupils who need to catch up. Teachers are adapting planning in these subjects for the summer term to make sure that pupils revise and consolidate important concepts before moving on to new learning.
- Leaders have made sure that reading is a priority. They have introduced a rich, broad range of texts to develop pupils' reading and ignite their imagination. However, there is a lack of consistency in how well staff help younger pupils learn to read. Leaders know that a coherent approach to teaching phonics is needed, so that all pupils learn to read quickly and confidently. Books that pupils read do not always help them practise the sounds they've learned. Leaders have plans to introduce a new phonics programme and deliver further training to make sure that all staff teach this effectively.
- Leaders are ambitious for pupils with SEND and are determined that these pupils should have the same access to the curriculum as their peers. They have begun to enhance the provision for these pupils, but this work is in its early stages. The consultant SENCo is working with teachers and support staff to make sure that pupils receive timely support to help them to achieve their individual targets. Leaders have ensured that pupils with SEND continue to receive external specialist support, for example speech and language therapy.
- The local governing body are knowledgeable about the school and the community which it serves. They offer an appropriate balance of support and challenge to leaders. Governors benefit from the support provided by the trust and value the training they receive.
- The trust is providing significant expertise and resources to the school. They have played a pivotal role in further strengthening leadership by appointing the consultant SENCo and a new deputy headteacher, who will join the school in September. The trust is also supporting leaders to make important and much needed improvements to develop a well-sequenced and coherent curriculum. The trust has strengthened the local governing body by appointing three new governors.

- The local authority is providing focused guidance in specific aspects of the school's work such as leadership and staff training for the early years foundation stage.

## **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, the chief executive officer and the education director of Anthem Schools Trust, staff, a member of the local governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also listened to pupils read to a member of staff and we considered a number of documents provided by the school, including minutes relating to the work of the local governing body. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 23 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Anthem Schools Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Louise Walker  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**