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Chris Taylor
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Dear Mr Taylor

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Kirkburton Middle School

Following my remote inspection with Fiona Manuel, 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 have serious weaknesses.

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 have serious weaknesses at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in October 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:

- develop the school's approach to reading to ensure it has greater prominence in the curriculum offer
- ensure all subject leaders have identified the most important content that they want pupils to learn within their areas of the curriculum
- sharpen the use of assessment to ensure teachers know precisely what pupils can remember from the taught curriculum.

Context

- There have been several changes at senior leadership level since the previous inspection. Several colleagues have left the school, including the former headteacher. You were appointed as the new headteacher in January 2020. The acting deputy head teacher was appointed in October 2019. Two new assistant headteachers and a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) started in 2020. Several new subject leaders and strategic curriculum leaders have also been appointed. Four new governors have joined the local governing body.
- Approximately 80% of pupils were educated at home in the spring term before the school re-opened to all pupils. Over 80% of your vulnerable pupils and 75% of pupils with an education, health and care plan were educated on site during that time.
- At the time of this inspection, 97% of pupils were attending on the school site. A small number of pupils were self-isolating and accessing lessons remotely.

Main findings

- Senior leaders have worked with curriculum leaders to monitor the quality of lessons being taught. This is helping to improve the standard of teaching across many subjects. Training for teachers has focused on ways to help pupils remember information that they have previously been taught. However, not all curriculum leaders have considered what the most important topics are in their subjects. This limited the impact of the training that has been provided.
- Leaders provided clear direction to teachers throughout the period of partial school closure in spring 2021. Teachers continued to teach from their existing curriculum plans and did not use the pandemic as an excuse to stop pupils from learning. Pupils accessed online 'live lessons' in most subjects. Having considered the needs of the school community, leaders felt that this was the most appropriate means of delivery. Pupils working remotely, in addition to

those learning in school, accessed the same lessons. Teachers told us that engagement with the remote education offer was high.

- Teachers are starting to check what pupils have remembered from the time that school was partially closed. Leaders are aware that staff are further ahead with this work in some subjects than others. Addressing this inconsistency is important. The pupils we spoke to told us that they engaged highly with their live lessons. However, they were much less confident in telling us what they had remembered from these lessons.
- Leaders have invested time into several reading initiatives. Some of these promote reading to all pupils. Other schemes support the weakest readers. Many of these initiatives are in their early stages of development, and it is too soon to say if they are making a positive difference for pupils. Leaders recognise their approach to the reading curriculum needs further refinement. This adjustment will help to ensure that reading is considered as a priority by all staff.
- Leaders are continuing to provide remote education for pupils working remotely. Teachers spoke highly of the ways that leaders have supported them to manage this extra workload. The parents who responded to our survey also praised the school's approach to remote education. This included the checks you make on the well-being of pupils not in school.
- The needs of vulnerable pupils are well managed by school leaders. Leaders provided families with devices to allow all pupils to access online lessons. The needs of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are also considered. You provided support for SEND pupils working in school and remotely.
- Those with responsibility for governance are holding leaders to account for the decisions they are making. Governors support many areas of school improvement. They have recently helped leaders to design the remote learning offer. Audits have taken place at governor level to assure statutory duties are being met. Several governors are accessing training to support them in their roles.
- The multi-academy trust that the school is a part of provide support to school leaders. Representatives from the local authority also work with the school. This support has helped leaders to provide education in the current circumstances. Audits of safeguarding arrangements, for example, have been conducted by a local authority representative, by a trust leader, and by a member of the local governing body. Support from the multi-academy trust has also helped school leaders respond to the additional challenges that the pandemic has presented.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers, pupils, representatives of those responsible for governance, representatives from the multi-academy trust, including the chief executive officer, and a representative of the local authority, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also spoke to leaders with responsibility for safeguarding. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 78 free-text responses, and 38 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Mast multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Duncan
Her Majesty's Inspector