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Leslie Gwinnett
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Dear Mrs Gwinnett

Additional monitoring inspection of Ormskirk School

Following my inspection with Linda Emmett, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), and Rachel Goodwin, HMI, of your school on 4 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.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, most of Ofsted's monitoring inspections are being carried out remotely. This inspection, however, took place on-site due to the concerns raised in the several complaints that Ofsted received about remote education.

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 May 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.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- ensure that the significant proportion of pupils who have engaged very little with remote education receive the support that they need to catch up when they return to school and during any further periods of remote education
- extend the range of strategies that teachers use to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to learn well, both in school and remotely
- make sure that the weakest readers, including those with gaps in their phonic knowledge, receive the support that they need to become accurate and fluent readers.

Context

- During the autumn term 2020, the previous headteacher and a deputy headteacher left the school. The governing body was disbanded, and an interim executive board was created. At short notice, you were appointed as interim executive headteacher in November 2020. You are also the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust (MAT) that the school is due to join. A number of other employees from the MAT currently work at the school. This includes the head of school and other leaders who are focused on developing aspects of the school's work, including safeguarding and remote education.
- In the autumn term 2020, almost all pupils were educated at home for at least a short period. Pupils in Years 8-10 were educated at home for the longest time.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately one tenth of pupils from Years 7-11 were being educated on the school site. This included one in eight vulnerable pupils and just under one half of pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

Main findings

- Since joining the school, you and other leaders have identified significant shortcomings in the school's approach to keeping pupils safe. You have wasted no time in addressing these issues and have made safeguarding your top priority. Leaders have provided all staff with training, which has increased their understanding of different risks. Staff are now more alert to different signs of neglect, abuse or a deterioration in pupils' mental health. Where appropriate, they report concerns. This enables leaders to make referrals to external agencies so that pupils receive the help that they need.
- During the current disruption to education, leaders have strengthened systems for overseeing the safety of pupils. Pupils now meet remotely with a

personal mentor who checks on their well-being. Leaders have introduced systems to make sure that staff make additional contact with pupils who are potentially more vulnerable than others. Pupils have continued to learn about different risks, such as those relating to their mental health. This has helped pupils to manage these risks and maintain a healthy routine.

- With a sense of urgency, you have addressed the biggest weaknesses in the school's approach to providing education at the current time. Leaders have trained staff on different aspects of remote learning. You have simplified the systems that teachers use to set work for pupils. This has made it much easier for pupils to access and engage with the learning that is provided. Leaders have also improved the way that teachers introduce new learning. All pupils, therefore, have access to a much improved remote offer.
- You are planning significant structural changes to the school's curriculum. For example, you intend to increase the time allocated to certain subjects in Years 7-9. This is to ensure that all pupils access an ambitious curriculum. You are also in the early stages of helping subject leaders to develop their curriculums. Subject leaders are now supported through the MAT's subject networks. Some receive additional support from specialist leaders of education. This is helping to increase teachers' understanding of what constitutes effective curriculum design.
- To varying degrees, subject leaders have made changes to their curriculums for the current circumstances. Some subject leaders have changed the order of their curriculums to avoid teaching topics that they consider to be particularly challenging. For example, teachers of mathematics have delayed the teaching of trigonometry. Some subject leaders have modified the curriculum to improve pupils' engagement with remote learning. In art and design, for example, teachers have decided to deliver a series of one-off lessons rather than longer projects. This is helping to improve pupils' engagement incrementally in most subjects.
- Teachers set all pupils work according to their usual timetables. Staff encourage pupils to complete work when they would ordinarily have different lessons. Teachers now use a common format for setting work. This has helped to make things much simpler for pupils. Teachers direct pupils to different resources, including pre-recorded videos. Teachers expect pupils to submit relevant work shortly after a lesson. Teachers use different methods to provide pupils with feedback. For example, some teachers create additional videos that address pupils' misconceptions. Pupils can get help from their teachers by contacting them using the school's online system. Despite this, some pupils only submit work sporadically. Although this picture is slowly improving, many disadvantaged pupils and those with low prior attainment only engage with remote learning intermittently.

- All pupils in the sixth form and Years 10-11 take part in weekly online seminars for different subjects. These seminars provide teachers and pupils with the opportunity to reflect on recent learning and discuss what they are going to learn next. Leaders are in the process of refining their plans for Year 11 and 13 for the rest of the school year. Staff expect pupils learning from home to complete the same work as those learning at school. Teaching assistants provide additional support to those pupils in school in person. This helps to ensure that these pupils can access and complete the work that is set.
- Leaders are in the very early stages of planning a strategy to improve pupils' reading. At the moment, they do not have a coherent plan for this aspect of their work. The weakest readers, including those with potential gaps in their phonic knowledge, do not receive the support that they need to become accurate and fluent readers.
- New leaders have uncovered deep weaknesses in the support for pupils with SEND. They have begun to address some of these flaws. They have made sure that all staff take responsibility for the learning and development of these pupils. Teachers have started to consider these pupils' needs when providing work remotely. For example, they break down instructions and explanations into small, manageable steps. They are also helping pupils with sensory needs. For example, they use adaptive technology to help pupils with visual impairments. Despite this, staff have received very little training in the past on how to meet pupils' different needs. As a result, the range of strategies they currently employ is very limited.
- Those responsible for governance have helped to ensure that new leaders urgently address the school's shortcomings. They have made sure that leaders continue to make improvements in many different areas. They ask probing questions of leaders and rigorously hold them to account for their work. They are linked to different areas of the school's work, such as safeguarding, to give them a clearer insight into the school's effectiveness.
- Staff from the MAT that the school is about to join have provided extensive support for the school. They focus on supporting the school in areas where the greatest weaknesses exist, such as remote education, safeguarding and support for pupils with SEND. They are in the early stages of helping subject leaders to develop their curriculums.

Evidence

We spoke to you, other leaders from the MAT, senior leaders, pupils and students, subject leaders, staff and those responsible for governance to discuss safeguarding and leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding and the curriculum. We considered evidence relating to how the school is providing remote education, including examples of teaching materials and feedback provided to pupils. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 235 free-text responses, and 76 responses to the 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 Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Will Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector