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Salima Ducker
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Dear Mrs Ducker

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Ranikhet Academy

Following my remote inspection with Clive Close, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 3 and 4 February 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.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, 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. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in December 2018.

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.

Context

- Since the previous monitoring inspection in March 2020, two teachers have returned from maternity leave.
- The school now has a local governing body. This is made up of the members of the previous transition board and three new governors who were appointed by the trust.
- During the autumn term 2020, very few pupils had to be educated remotely.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately two thirds of pupils were working from home. Broadly half of pupils who are vulnerable, and half of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending on site.

Main findings

- Leaders are working extremely hard to provide education for pupils. Pupils study the same work whether they are at home or at school, and whether they are using remote technology or paper-based resources. Leaders have made sure that all pupils have the access they need to be able to complete and submit work. A new, more interactive, system for remote learning has increased pupils' participation in learning from home.
- Pupils working remotely can join a live session at the start and end of each day. This enables teachers to check that pupils know what to do. Pupils say they like seeing their teachers and their friends. Throughout each day, staff in small teams teach the pupils on site, hold online sessions for pupils at home, provide feedback and give extra help to pupils.
- Work on improving the curriculum continues to be a priority. Since March 2020, curriculum plans in most subjects have been further developed. It is now much clearer how knowledge in each subject is sequenced so that pupils can build on their learning as they go through the school, although the links between the early years and the key stage 1 curriculum are not always apparent. Leaders are now refining plans so that they show the core knowledge teachers want pupils to know and remember. There is still some work to do to make sure that assessments in foundation subjects check what knowledge pupils have gained.
- Leaders are well aware that historic weaknesses mean that older pupils have gaps in their knowledge, and that all pupils are likely to have some gaps as a result of the disruption to schooling over the last year. Teachers know they need to be flexible in their teaching so that they can discover and fill these gaps as they emerge.
- After the last monitoring visit, leaders quickly made plans to improve the reading fluency of pupils in key stage 1. They trained staff and volunteers in

how to hear pupils read, and set up a timetable so that every pupil would be heard reading every day. Unfortunately, they have not been able to implement these plans as a result of the restrictions in place because of COVID-19. However, teachers continue to prioritise reading.

- All pupils in the early years and in key stage 1 access a daily phonics session. Pupils are given resources to learn phonics at home, including audio and visual clips of how to say the sounds being learned. New e-books allow pupils at home to practise reading using the phonics sounds they have been taught. All older pupils continue to get extra help in phonics if they need it.
- Pupils are able to choose books that match their reading ability, and log the books they read for pleasure, using a new electronic system. In English, pupils also study a text chosen by their teacher. Leaders' next stage is to check that the books pupils in key stage 2 are reading for themselves match the quality and range of those studied in class.
- The special educational needs coordinator works closely with staff to ensure that work is adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders make sure that pupils with SEND and vulnerable pupils continue to get the expert help and therapy they need from external and internal specialists.
- The chair of governors has held the school to account strongly since her appointment last March. Governors receive better information from the school, which helps them to ask the right questions about pupils' attendance, the curriculum and safeguarding. New governors are developing in their roles.
- The trust has supported the school throughout the pandemic, including with safeguarding, administration, technical help and curriculum resources. Trust leaders know the school well and contribute strongly to the development of the curriculum and the evident improvement in leaders' skills.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the head of school, executive headteacher, other senior leaders, the regional director for the multi-academy trust, the chair of the local governing body and staff to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also spoke to some pupils and viewed resources available as part of the school's curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of REAch2 Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Reading (Brighter Futures for Children). This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old
Her Majesty's Inspector