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Lesley Gwinnett
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Dear Mrs Gwinnett

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Wellfield High School

Following my remote inspection with Brian Oppenheim, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 25 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 improvement.

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 has received three successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in May 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.

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

- review the curriculum for the 'creative' subjects in key stage 3, to ensure that it has sufficient breadth and depth.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, governors have appointed a new head of school and three new assistant headteachers. Leaders have been working closely with a multi-academy trust (MAT).
- During autumn term 2020, the majority of pupils experienced periods of remote education for short periods of time. Pupils in Years 8, 9 and 10 were educated remotely for periods of two weeks to mitigate staff absence.
- At present, a small proportion of pupils are being educated on site. This includes approximately one fifth of vulnerable pupils and two out of every five pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Main findings

- You and other leaders have ensured that teachers have been appropriately trained to deliver education during the current challenging time. Teachers set work so that pupils can continue to learn their usual curriculum whether they are in school or working at home. Pupils' completion of work is checked, and teachers provide feedback so that pupils can build on what they have learned.
- Subject-specific training for staff, supported by MAT leaders and teachers, and work on curriculum development have continued throughout the pandemic. You and other leaders appreciate the opportunities to collaborate with others across the MAT. This has helped to develop leaders' longer-term thinking about the curriculum.
- In recent months, leaders have reviewed and re-ordered individual subject curriculum plans. In response to the current situation, the order in which some subject content is taught has been modified. For example, in history, teaching about the Holocaust has been deferred until all pupils are back in school. This is so that sensitive discussions can take place in person. Leaders have increased the time allocated to what the school describes as 'creative' subjects in Years 7 and 8. The carousel arrangement for these subjects has also been changed temporarily, from a four-week to a two-week rotation. Nevertheless, an important priority for leaders is to check that these arrangements allow national curriculum foundation subjects, such as music, art, and design technology to be taught in sufficient breadth and depth.
- All pupils, whether working in school or at home, have regular meetings with their mentor. Vulnerable pupils and those who require extra support have more frequent contact with staff. This regular communication helps to identify and remove barriers to pupils' learning.

- Year 11 pupils are continuing with all their usual studies. Leaders have arranged special assemblies to help support these pupils with issues specific to the current context. Leaders continue to provide careers education and guidance. The content of GCSE subjects is being prioritised with an eye on preparing pupils for their post-16 studies.
- Leaders are focusing on improving pupils' vocabulary in all subjects. Extracts from books are read to pupils in assemblies to raise the profile of reading. Pupils in the literacy support programme continue to receive their usual support for reading if they work from home or at school.
- Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND can access the full school curriculum. Pupils receive personalised support when this is needed. Teachers are well informed about strategies that they can employ to support pupils' individual needs.
- Those responsible for governance have a clear understanding of their roles. They hold you and other leaders to account for your work. Governors have an accurate awareness of the school's strengths and areas of development, and the extent to which these match the current school priorities. They are knowledgeable about the remote education offer.
- You have continued to make pupils' attendance and engagement in learning a priority during the pandemic. The local authority and the trust have supported the school leaders with attendance procedures. Leaders have created strong relationships with families. This is reflected in the positive feedback from parents and carers. You and other leaders recognise that improving attendance will remain a priority when the school re-opens to all pupils.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, staff, a representative of those responsible for governance, a representative of the local authority and a representative from the MAT that you are working with to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also reviewed remote lessons with staff and looked at minutes and documents uploaded by the school. We looked at 50 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 48 free-text responses. We also looked at 45 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Sophie Welch
Her Majesty's Inspector