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24 March 2021

Hayley Scargill
Principal
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Dear Mrs Scargill

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Victoria Primary Academy

Following my remote inspection with Caroline Poole, Seconded Inspector, of your school on 3 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, 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 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.

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

- ensure that subject leaders who are new to their role are given support to both monitor the quality of the revised curriculum and to give effective feedback to colleagues
- make sure that leaders check that, in every subject, pupils are remembering the key vocabulary they need to express their understanding.

Context

- The turbulence in staff that was noted at the last inspection has reduced considerably. Staffing is now largely stable. A deputy coordinator responsible for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has been appointed.
- During the autumn term, less than one in five pupils were educated remotely.
- Currently, around three quarters of pupils are being educated at home. Nine in ten vulnerable pupils are receiving education in school, as well as around three in ten pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- At present, no staff are absent due to COVID-19. Two members of staff are shielding with their families.

Main findings

- Before the school partially closed to all pupils in March 2020, you and staff had been working to improve the curriculum. You told us how this has meant that lesson planning now sets out the knowledge pupils will learn at different points. We spoke to subject leaders who could give examples of this. However, some subject leaders are new. They have not had an opportunity to check how well the refined curriculum is taught. Some need guidance so they become skilled in helping their colleagues to improve. Also, you had noted that pupils do not know enough subject-specific words and phrases to explain things. You have made sure the new plans include teaching these clearly to pupils. However, you cannot be sure pupils are learning and using this vocabulary across all year groups and subjects.
- You and staff have worked together under challenging circumstances to ensure pupils receive education. Staff morale remains high. Adults work together closely. All subjects in the school's usual curriculum are being taught. Pupils learning remotely receive the same curriculum as those in school. Teachers set work and let pupils know how well they are doing. We saw how staff in Year 5 had noted that some pupils did not understand how to calculate the area of a compound shape, and the way in which this was explained to them. Staff keep in regular contact with pupils and their families. Uptake of remote education is high. A large majority of pupils complete all

their work. Staff note any not engaging fully and remind them of the school's expectations. They support parents whose children's motivation starts to decline.

- Some aspects of the curriculum have needed to be re-ordered. For example, teachers have been unable to teach team games in physical education (PE). Instead, pupils have learned gymnastics and dance remotely. Teachers plan to cover the remaining areas of the physical education curriculum once all pupils return to school. The youngest pupils receive less screen-based learning. Those in the Reception Year have more practical work. Nevertheless, they are continuing to practise, for instance, their writing. A pupil had written, with correct punctuation, spelling and finger spacing, 'It can swim. It has fins'. The work pupils of all ages are receiving is challenging. We saw examples of pupils in Year 2 learning the symbols $>$ and $<$ in mathematics. Pupils in Year 6 were studying Darwin's theory of natural selection in science. Staff who teach pupils to learn to read have received specific training. These pupils learn phonics every day. Staff recap learning, so pupils remember.
- Education in school is available for all vulnerable pupils and children of key workers whose parents request it. Staff check the education and help that vulnerable pupils are receiving. They aim to ensure the needs of these pupils are met. This is also true for those pupils who have SEND. They are being supported to learn the academic curriculum. Some pupils also have social, emotional and mental health needs. These pupils are being helped to, for example, learn how to take turns.
- Staff are supporting any parents having difficulty accessing remote education for their children. For those parents whose first language is not English, the online platform also translates teachers' written instructions. This helps those parents to support their children's learning at home. Almost all parents are positive about the communication and education the school has provided remotely.
- The multi-academy trust has continued to help you and staff during the pandemic. You meet with the chief executive officer regularly, who provides you with useful information, asks you challenging questions, and has arranged for you to meet with colleagues in other schools as part of your work to improve the curriculum. The board of directors hold you to account. You have given them detailed information about the school's remote education. This is allowing them to check its quality.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We met with you, both the vice-principal and the assistant principal, the leader of the early years, and subject leaders for mathematics, physical education and mental health, and for personal, social and economic education, religious education and spiritual, moral, social and cultural

education. We spoke with the team leaders for the Reception Year and Year 1, and for Years 2 and 3. We held video calls with the chief executive officer of the Hatton Academies Trust, and with the chair of the board of directors, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also undertook 'visits' to recorded lessons, scrutinised examples of pupils' work submitted as part of their remote education, heard a sample of pupils read, and looked at school documentation. We studied responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 15 free-text responses, and 45 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector