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Emma Gill
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Dear Mrs Gill

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Ferham Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Alex Thorp, 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 require special measures.

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 at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in February 2020.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) 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 curriculum plans in subjects other than English and mathematics to ensure they are more bespoke and that they meet the specific needs of all pupils at the school
- adapt the curriculum planning for the early years to make sure that pupils are well prepared for each subject in the key stage 1 curriculum
- give pupils in the early stages of learning to read more opportunities to re-read books to develop their fluency and confidence.

Context

- Since the last section 5 inspection, there have been significant changes to staffing and governance. Six staff left the school, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Five staff have joined the school, including an executive headteacher and a new headteacher. The whole governing body has been replaced by an interim executive board.
- At the start of the spring term, when the school was only open to some pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions, 85% of pupils were educated at home. During this time, 60% of vulnerable pupils and 80% of pupils with education, health and care plans were attending on site.
- At the time of the inspection, almost 100% of pupils were attending on site. Remote education is being provided for a very small number of pupils who are shielding.
- At the time of the inspection, approximately 10% of staff were absent due to COVID-19. Leaders are dealing with this by providing in-house and long-term supply cover.

Main findings

- Leaders are continuing to make pupils' physical and mental well-being their highest priority. They have also continued their work on improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. There is a strong focus on English and mathematics throughout the school but other subjects from the usual curriculum are being covered to a lesser extent.
- A limited amount of work was done on curriculum development before the start of the pandemic. This is because new leaders chose to focus on improving behaviour first. Their work on the curriculum began with English. They provided training for staff to make sure they had the skills they need to deliver the new scheme of work effectively. A scheme of work is also in place for mathematics.

- For other subjects, leaders are relying on curriculum plans from another school. Teachers are using some of these plans now and will begin to use them fully after Easter. Leaders acknowledge that they need to adapt these plans to ensure that they meet the needs of the pupils at Ferham. Plans for the early years link well with those for English in key stage 1 and show progression in reading and writing. However, links with other subjects taught in key stage 1 are not clear.
- Assessments have taken place in English and mathematics to identify what pupils have learned and remembered from the taught curriculum. The findings from these assessments are being used to inform lesson planning. Assessment in other subjects is due to take place in the summer term.
- Leaders are ensuring that reading has a high priority throughout the school. Staff are well trained and are confident in delivering daily reading lessons and catch-up sessions. Leaders are keen to promote a love of reading and insist that teachers read to children at least once each day. Ongoing staff training is broadening their knowledge of children's literature. This is to support staff to recommend a wide range of books to pupils, especially reluctant readers.
- Pupils in the early stages of learning to read have books in school and at home that are carefully matched to their phonics knowledge. They are able to read these books with minimal support from adults. However, they do not read fluently. Pupils need to be given more opportunities to re-read books to develop fluency and confidence.
- An effective system is in place to provide education to pupils who need to learn from home. Work mirrors that done in school but is adapted to meet individual needs. Staff make regular contact with pupils and their families to offer support.
- Pupils with special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Provision is carefully planned, monitored and reviewed to ensure that it meets specific learning needs. Leaders work sensitively with vulnerable pupils and their families to help them to access the support they need.
- Over time, governors have not provided leaders with appropriate support and challenge. Members of the new interim executive board have a good understanding of the difficulties school leaders are facing and are providing effective support. They are beginning to challenge leaders to ensure that education during the current circumstances is well matched to pupils' needs.
- The local authority has supported leaders to improve pupils' behaviour and the teaching of phonics. The local authority set up the interim executive board and has brokered support from a multi-academy trust. The school is due to join this trust at the beginning of May 2021. The trust is currently providing support for leadership and the development of the curriculum.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, the executive headteacher, other leaders, the chair of the interim executive board and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also observed pupils reading to a familiar adult and considered minutes of interim executive board meetings. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including six free-text responses, and 30 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector