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David McGachen
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Dear Mr McGachen

Additional monitoring inspection of Pinewood School

Following my onsite inspection with Cindy Impey, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on Thursday 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 require improvement.

Following the government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, this monitoring inspection was carried out on site. This was due to significant concerns about safeguarding.

The inspection took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in September 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:

- make sure there is a rigorous and systematic approach to the teaching of reading for pupils
- make sure that governors hold leaders to account for sustained improvements in the quality of education for pupils.

Context

- Pinewood School provides education for pupils aged 11 to 16 who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school provides support for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, speech, language and communication needs, autistic spectrum disorder and multiple needs.
- All pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Pupils are placed at the school from three different local authorities.
- At the time of the inspection, approximately 78% of pupils were being educated at home. All pupils are due to return to school on 8 March 2021.
- Across the autumn term, 2020 around 30% of pupils in key stage 4 were educated remotely for some of the time.

Main findings

- You are committed to providing a wide range of subjects to pupils who are learning from home at this time. Pupils receive the same quality as those who are attending the school site. You have set clear expectations for pupils to attend lessons and have been pleased with the enthusiasm and participation of pupils.
- Leaders and staff monitor pupils' attendance. There are clear procedures for staff to report any pastoral concerns to senior leaders following the weekly tutorials. In the autumn term 2020, pupils attended school well. This has continued through the spring term, whether pupils have been learning remotely or in school.
- The safeguarding and welfare of pupils are high priorities for everyone. Leaders and staff are trained to spot potential safeguarding issues. They know how to report concerns using the school's systems. The leadership team, responsible for safeguarding, are vigilant. They act swiftly and in a timely way. Clear protocols are followed for the protection of the most vulnerable pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils have access to devices and appropriate internet connections so pupils can complete their work at home. Pupils have received teaching to use online technologies safely and securely. Staff have

provided parents and pupils with a wealth of information and technical support so everyone can access learning easily.

- All pupils, at home and in school, are receiving daily English and mathematics lessons. Some lessons are 'live', and others recorded by class teachers. You have also prioritised pupils' welfare, emotional and physical health. Personal, social, health and economic lessons continue weekly along with 'well-being' lessons.
- Since the previous inspection, in September 2019, leaders have reviewed the curriculum. In key stage 3, leaders have chosen a published scheme, which you consider meets pupils' needs. Changes were recently made to provide pupils with more opportunities to secure their knowledge and understanding. Equally, there are firm plans to change the curriculum in mathematics. All these curriculum developments are new, and the impact of this work on helping pupils learn more is yet to be fully seen.
- In the autumn term 2020, more pupils than is usually the case started in Year 7. A substantial number have not acquired early reading skills. Although the teaching of phonics is in place, there is not a sufficiently rigorous and systematic approach to the teaching of reading. Training for staff is in the early stages.
- In key stage 4, you have changed the curriculum to include more functional and practical learning. You are now using a nationally recognised accreditation scheme to ensure that pupils gain relevant qualifications for entry into the next stage of their academic or working life. All pupils in Year 11 go onto college. This year is no different. You are working with colleges to ensure that pupils can pursue their academic choices.
- The pastoral team, together with leaders and teachers, have ensured that there have been no delays or changes to reviewing pupils' EHC plans. You have continued to liaise with external agencies, adapting the support to pupils as needed. In the parental questionnaire, most parents were very positive about the care and support which their children receive.
- The school leadership team has been strengthened since the previous inspection. Middle leaders continue to design and adapt the new curriculum and provide training for staff. Staff are highly positive of the work of leaders and the way they feel listened to when leaders make decisions about what pupils will learn.
- Governors visit the school to assure themselves that safeguarding processes and the remote education on offer are in place. However, governors are not holding leaders to account well enough for the ongoing and sustained improvement of the quality of education.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted on site. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, curriculum and pastoral leaders, pupils, staff, representatives of those with responsibilities for governance, and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also visited classrooms and observed online lessons. We reviewed a wide range of documentation including that related to safeguarding, the school's improvement plans, training and minutes of governing body meeting. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 10 free-text responses, and 59 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 Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector