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Michael Arthur
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Arthur

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Toner Avenue Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Tim Scargill-Knight, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 26 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.

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 October 2018.

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:

- ensure that governors develop ways to check and challenge the information they receive from leaders to better hold leaders to account
- ensure pupils who have not accessed physical education (PE) on site have opportunities to catch up on missed learning.

Context

- Since the last inspection, three teachers have joined the school and one has left. Two teaching assistants have left the school and four have been appointed. One governor resigned and three new governors have joined the governing body, including a new vice-chair.
- During the autumn term 2020, approximately two fifths of pupils had to learn from home for a period of time because of COVID-19. One class of children in Year 1 had repeated periods of self-isolation.
- During this inspection, the school was open to vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers. Almost a quarter of pupils were attending school and three quarters were learning from home. A small number of vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending school.
- Currently, a small number of staff are working from home due to COVID-19.

Main findings

- You and your leadership team have prioritised remote education during the current partial school closure. You have worked well as a leadership team to tackle any challenges you face. As a result, all pupils are accessing education either in school or at home.
- You check if pupils find it difficult to learn at home. Leaders have provided laptops and learning resources to help families to access education. A high proportion of pupils are accessing online tasks including 'live' lessons. Teachers provide online praise or support if pupils struggle with the lesson content. Leaders provide paper copies of work and resources if necessary.
- Leaders aim to provide the same lesson content to pupils at home as the pupils in school receive. In most subjects, remote learning follows the school's planned curriculum. However, this is not the case in PE. Pupils in school develop specific knowledge and skills through the planned curriculum for PE. However, pupils educated at home take part in one fitness activity per week. Leaders' plans to recover lost learning in PE are unclear at this stage.

- Reading remains a high priority within the curriculum. All pupils in the earliest stages of learning to read receive a daily phonics lesson. Pupils learning from home have the same lesson and reading tasks to complete as their peers in school. Pupils' reading books match the letters and sounds that they know with reading content that is appropriate for their age. Pupils read aloud with confidence. Older pupils access a wide range of reading books, in school and online, to help them develop fluency and understanding. Leaders listen to pupils read in school to provide guidance and support. Pupils who are working at home have the same opportunity via a video link.
- You and your leaders know your vulnerable pupils well. Adults provide support to vulnerable pupils who are being educated in school. Leaders make regular checks on any vulnerable pupils who are learning from home. They deliver resources to help these pupils access their work. Many parents who gave their views appreciate the support their children receive.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) provides guidance to all staff. Pupils' individual learning plans identify the relevant support that pupils with SEND need. The SENCo seeks timely advice from other professionals to get support for pupils with SEND. Leaders have provided resources, such as sensory equipment, to pupils who are learning remotely. This means that pupils benefit from the support they get in school while they learn from home. Pupils with SEND are able to access online programs to help them develop their reading skills.
- Governors have accessed a wide range of relevant training. They are well informed through detailed and current information provided by leaders. As a result, they are knowledgeable about the current education that leaders provide and about remote education. However, governors accept too readily the information they receive. They do not check this information thoroughly or ask further questions to assure themselves of the effectiveness of leaders' actions.
- Leaders value the support and challenge that they receive from the school improvement adviser. She has continued to support and challenge leaders during this time of partial school closure. The local authority's information technology team has supported you to develop your strategy for remote education. As a result, all pupils learning at home are able to access remote learning in the current circumstances.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, the deputy headteacher, the leader for English, three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and the school improvement adviser from the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also observed pupils in school reading to a familiar adult. We reviewed minutes of governing body meetings and examined curriculum plans. We looked at samples of pupils' work and viewed a sample of lessons delivered remotely. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 23 free-text responses, and 22 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 South Tyneside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alison Aitchison
Her Majesty's Inspector