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Julie-Ann Swaysland
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Dear Mrs Swaysland

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Ivingswood Academy

Following my remote inspection with Daniel Lambert, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 23 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 special measures.

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 was judged to require special measures at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in September 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:

- improve the implementation of the early reading curriculum so that all pupils learn to read as expected, including making sure that books are well matched to pupils' reading ability.

Context

- Since the previous monitoring inspection in October 2019, one new teacher and a governor have joined the school.
- During the autumn term 2020, a very small number of pupils experienced periods of remote education because of COVID-19.
- At the time of this inspection, 62% of pupils were working from home. Fifty per cent of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and 88% of vulnerable pupils were attending school.

Main findings

- Leaders and governors have worked hard to ensure that all pupils are receiving an education in the current circumstances. Pupils who are working at home and those in school continue to study all national curriculum subjects except for computing. Leaders aim to introduce learning in this subject as soon as all pupils return to school.
- Leaders make sure that all pupils, including those with SEND, and their families are well supported. They make weekly phone calls and carry out regular checks on the welfare and well-being of pupils who are not attending school. Leaders have provided laptops to pupils who do not have one.
- When schools closed on 23 March 2020, leaders were well on their way with the implementation of a newly planned curriculum. Since the start of this academic year, leaders have refined planning carefully to ensure that pupils not only catch up on any missed learning but continue to learn the key knowledge in most subjects. Currently, teachers have changed the order of some activities in art and design and technology. Pupils will be taught the aspects that require them to use specialist equipment in these subjects when they return to school.
- Teachers are delivering the curriculum effectively in subjects such as mathematics, science, history and geography. For instance, in mathematics, they are routinely checking pupils' understanding before moving them onto more difficult concepts. Leaders have provided pupils with work books and mathematical equipment to help them when learning at home. Vulnerable pupils and children of key workers who are in school receive tailored support. For example, they are provided with additional teaching to help them develop their understanding of the concepts being taught.

- Leaders have ensured that supporting pupils to learn to read remains central to the school's work. Leaders have tried to remain faithful to the school's well structured and sequenced phonics programme. However, they recognise that, in the current circumstances, the teaching of phonics has become somewhat disjointed. While staff make sure that pupils have the opportunity to read on a regular basis, at times the books that some of the key worker and vulnerable pupils read in school are either too easy or too hard.
- Pupils with SEND who attend school work with staff who know them well and set work which is aligned to pupils' individual needs. Pupils with SEND also receive appropriate specialist support, for example speech and language therapy. For those working at home, leaders have offered bespoke provision, including training and support for parents.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have benefited from intermittent external support which includes working with a local school and two multi-academy trusts. This has provided the necessary momentum to support leaders in their work to develop curriculum planning and staff subject knowledge.
- The executive headteacher from the Red Kite Schools Trust (RKST) and governors provide well balanced support and challenge to leaders. They have an accurate insight of the actions needed to drive improvement plans as well as the daily challenges which leaders currently face. They have assured themselves about the education which pupils are receiving and know which aspects need to be further improved.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, curriculum leaders, the chair of the governing body, two other governors and the executive headteacher from RKST to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

Inspectors also listened to pupils read to a member of staff, and looked at curriculum plans, lesson resources, pre-recorded lessons and pupils' work. Inspectors also took account of seven responses by parents to Ofsted Parent View, including four free-text responses, and 16 staff responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

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

Yours sincerely

Shazia Akram
Her Majesty's Inspector