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Andy Byers
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Dear Mr Byers

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Framwellgate School Durham

Following my remote inspection with Janet Hallett, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 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.

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 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:

- further develop and embed a whole-school reading strategy to encourage more pupils to read widely and often.

Context

- Since the last inspection, a number of new appointments have been made. These include a director of safeguarding, a special educational needs coordinator, two new assistant headteachers and a curriculum leader of mathematics.
- Across the autumn term 2020, approximately three quarters of pupils in Years 7 to 11 experienced periods of remote education due to COVID-19. Years 7 and 8 were affected more than others. In addition, approximately one half of pupils in Years 12 and 13 also experienced periods of remote education.
- At the time of this inspection, most pupils were being educated at home. Since the school closed on the 5 January 2021, approximately one fifth of vulnerable pupils were attending on site. In addition, approximately one third of those pupils with education, health and care plans were attending on site.

Main findings

- You and your team are taking the necessary actions to provide education in the current circumstances. Senior leaders have maintained a focus on developing the quality of education in spite of the pandemic. Parents and carers value the communication from the school about the curriculum.
- Before the pandemic, curriculum leaders completed a review of the curriculum and spent time refining subject plans. They focused on developing the breadth and depth of the curriculum for Years 7 and 8. Leaders continue to monitor the curriculum, and this remains an ongoing priority. It is too soon for leaders to fully evaluate the impact of all the changes that they have made.
- Curriculum leaders work with teachers from local primary schools to understand what pupils learned previously. This helps curriculum leaders to build on pupils' prior knowledge when they start the school.
- Pupils follow their regular timetable at home and in school. They have a mixture of recorded and live lessons. Leaders monitor attendance to lessons. Leaders encourage and set expectations for vulnerable pupils to attend school. Leaders contact families regularly to identify and sort out any difficulties. If pupils struggle at home, then they are invited to come into school. Leaders have appointed additional staff to support pupils' well-being.
- During the pandemic, curriculum leaders made some changes to the order of curriculum content. Leaders have a clear rationale for changes made. For

example, pupils are now studying a poetry unit in English instead of a planned unit on drama so that pupils can use their prior knowledge of poetry to help them. When pupils are working remotely, leaders create opportunities for enrichment. For example, pupils could listen to staff read novels on World Book Day.

- Staff check that curriculum content is covered for all year groups. Leaders employed additional staff to support pupils who need extra help. Pupils in Year 11 have completed assessments, and leaders plan opportunities to provide feedback in lessons. Year 11 pupils received appropriate advice and guidance to help them to plan their next steps. The university application process has continued remotely for students in Year 13. The sixth form continues to grow. Leaders reported a growing number of internal applications for September 2021.
- Leaders have ensured that there is additional support for pupils so that they can improve their phonics knowledge and reading fluency. Staff provide support both at home and in school. During lockdown, leaders sent additional reading books home to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Work on reading has focused on the provision for the weaker readers. Leaders have not embedded a whole-school reading strategy to support more pupils to read widely and often.
- Pupils with SEND receive support both in and out of school. Teaching assistants help pupils with SEND on site and remotely when pupils are working from home. Leaders encourage teachers to share strategies with each other to support pupils with SEND in subjects. These strategies are reviewed regularly, and staff listen to pupils' views on what helps them to learn.
- The local governing body monitors progress closely on behalf of the trust board. Governors are increasingly proactive and strategic in their roles. They understand the priorities of the school and know the school well. They receive helpful information on curriculum developments in the school from leaders. Governors take part in planned training opportunities which match up with the needs of the school. Moving forward, governors recognise that developing work on reading needs to be a priority for the school.
- Leaders work with external partners and engage with current research to support curriculum developments. Subject leaders benefit from working with a variety of other schools to develop their approaches to delivering subject content. Staff appreciated the training opportunities. External consultants support the school with coaching and mentoring for subject leaders.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, staff and representatives of those responsible for governance to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also scrutinised documentation provided by the school and looked at examples of remote education. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 295 free-text responses, and 95 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Lucy Bruce
Her Majesty's Inspector