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Ben Eddy
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Dear Mr Eddy

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Fowey River Academy

Following my remote inspection with Matthew Barnes, 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 improvement.

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 has received two successive judgements of requires improvement. 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.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- identify the knowledge pupils will gain in each subject, ensuring that the selection matches the scope of the national curriculum
- use assessment effectively to help pupils remember more of what they learn
- prioritise the teaching of phonics as part of the curriculum for pupils at the early stages of reading.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership of the school. The multi-academy trust has appointed an interim chief executive officer. A new interim headteacher joined the school in November 2019. Since then, several senior leaders have also joined the school, including a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo).
- Across the autumn term 2020, approximately 20% of pupils had to be educated remotely for short periods.
- At the time of the inspection, less than 10% of pupils were being educated on site. This included half of all vulnerable pupils. Most pupils with education health and care plans (EHC plans) were attending school in person.

Main findings

- You ensure that all pupils have the technology they need to learn from home. When this is necessary, pupils confidently access their full curriculum through pre-recorded lessons and live 'question and answer' sessions. Teachers give pupils regular feedback, which helps them to be increasingly successful when learning in this way. Leaders carefully monitor the quality of pupils' work. They take the right actions to get the most out of pupils.
- You have established an on-site hub for vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers who attend school in person. These pupils receive the same education as those learning at home. Supportive adults help pupils to get organised for the day and stay motivated. Pupils told us that they appreciate being able to come into school where they can ask questions if they do not understand.
- Over an 18-month period, you have worked with staff to redesign the curriculum. You have planned experiences for pupils that contribute well to their personal development. You have strengthened the links between subjects and have brought the curriculum to life for pupils using local case studies. However, the curriculum does not yet cover the full range of content that pupils need to know.
- Your subject leaders share your aims for the curriculum. They want pupils to leave Fowey River Academy with many skills. However, they have not yet fully

identified the subject knowledge that pupils need to develop these skills. Pupils practise their skills in assessments before they know enough to do well. Teachers do not focus enough on checking that pupils have learned the most important content first.

- Since the previous inspection, you have prioritised reading. Pupils are reading more regularly. You have found ways to keep this going when pupils learn remotely. In each subject, teachers enhance the curriculum by sharing real-world texts with pupils. Teachers encourage pupils to learn and use new vocabulary. Most pupils are improving as readers over time. However, some pupils join the school unable to read well. You have not yet put into practice your plans to teach such pupils to read using a phonics programme.
- Pupils in Year 11 have continued to study for their examination courses remotely. You have rightly continued to provide pastoral care to support their well-being. You intend to provide careers guidance interviews when the school reopens fully.
- Leaders have carefully considered the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They have made sound decisions on how best to provide education in the current circumstances. The SENCo is helping teachers to make the curriculum easier for pupils to access. Where pupils' needs are best met on site, they are taught by specialist staff in a dedicated unit.
- The trust has wisely invested in the school's digital capabilities. This helped staff and pupils to switch to remote education when this became necessary. Trust leaders have closely monitored pupils' engagement while they have been educated remotely. They share your determination to never give up on pupils who are the hardest to reach.
- The trust has significantly improved leadership capacity in the school. Curriculum leaders have welcomed the opportunity to learn from colleagues across the trust by joining 'research circles'. You are also supported effectively by a highly skilled group of local governors.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, your senior leadership team and leaders from the multi-academy trust to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also met with a group of governors who form part of the 'Local Academy Committee'. We held meetings with curriculum leaders and reviewed curriculum plans. We examined a sample of the education that is being provided remotely. We met with a group of pupils to discuss their experiences of remote and on-site learning. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 46 free-text responses, and 52 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Leading Edge Academies Partnership multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lydia Pride
Her Majesty's Inspector