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Miss Kirsty Laing
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Laing

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Carcroft Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Jean Watt, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 27 and 28 January 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in December 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.

Context

- Approximately a third of staff have joined the school since January 2020. You have appointed additional senior leaders to add capacity to your team and have increased the number of teaching staff to reduce class sizes. You have appointed eight new teachers in the current school year.
- Across the autumn term of 2020, only a small number of pupils had to learn from home.
- Most pupils were being educated on site at the time of this inspection. About a quarter were being educated at home. Approximately three quarters of pupils who are vulnerable and almost all of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending on site.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately a fifth of staff were absent due to COVID-19. Leaders are ensuring that lessons continue by using the extra staff that they have recently employed.

Main findings

- Leaders and governors have made it a priority to ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, have access to either on-site or remote education. A very high proportion of pupils are attending school on site at present. Pupils are studying the usual curriculum in the main, whether they are learning at home or at school.
- Governors have worked with leaders to ensure that parents and carers are committed to, and familiar with remote learning arrangements. Access to equipment has been provided when needed. Leaders have improved their remote learning offer over time to increase the proportion of pupils who are accessing it regularly.
- Leaders recognise that, historically, expectations for pupils with SEND were not high enough. Since the last monitoring inspection, governors and leaders have made this a priority. Newly appointed leaders have put in place a more rigorous system to identify and support pupils with SEND.
- You and your leadership team have also prioritised reading. The phonics leader has overseen training and support to make sure that staff know how to teach early reading consistently. This is supporting the delivery of the phonics programme to children in early years and pupils in key stage 1. It is also helping phonics teaching for pupils who are in key stage 2 but are still struggling to learn to read. Teaching includes live lessons, in small groups or on a one-to-one basis, for pupils learning at home. Pupils who have fallen behind with learning to read are also receiving extra sessions to help them catch up. Leaders are aware that their actions are making an increasingly positive difference. However, many pupils remain behind the expected pace of the phonics programme.

- Leaders, supported by a local multi-academy trust over the last year, have begun to implement a new curriculum. The curriculum is in its early stages. It is not clear whether the curriculum content is successfully addressing the gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders are aware that this has received more limited attention in the light of their need to prioritise other actions as a result of COVID-19.
- Governors and leaders have made appointments to leadership roles to increase leadership capacity. This has been instrumental in enabling you to implement many of the changes that have been necessary. You have also worked with a local multi-academy trust to ensure that the school benefits from local support networks.
- Leaders' work to change the culture in school has contributed to pupils' improved behaviour and motivation to learn. A focus on working hard, getting smart and being kind has been central to this improvement. The development of 'crew' has also encouraged a sense of community and positive relationships between staff and pupils. Curriculum time has been allocated to responding to the issues pupils are facing in the light of COVID-19. Leaders report that pupils are keen to be in school and are ready to learn. Teachers confirm this.
- The local authority has offered support and challenge for governors and leaders. Leaders have used this to help them make the necessary improvements regarding phonics teaching and provision for pupils with SEND.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance, a representative of the local authority and a representative from a local trust to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also watched recorded clips of reading lessons and extra support sessions that pupils had experienced either in school or remotely.

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

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey
Her Majesty's Inspector