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Jane Booth
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Booth

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Gainsborough Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Janette Walker, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 18 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 was judged to require improvement at its previous section 5 inspection in June 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:

- ensure that the school's plans for subjects in the wider curriculum identify the specific knowledge that pupils need to learn in each year group.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, there have been substantial changes in staffing. Seven new teachers have been appointed including a new leader for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school became part of a hard federation with Cledford Primary School in September 2018. A new governing body, that governs both schools, is now in place.
- Approximately four fifths of pupils were educated at home when the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term. Around two fifths of the school's vulnerable pupils were attending on site. Approximately four fifths of the pupils with education, health and care plans were attending on site.
- At the time of this inspection, nearly all pupils were attending school.

Main findings

- You have worked effectively with staff and governors to ensure that all pupils are provided with an appropriate education at this time. You have made sure that all pupils continue to study the usual curriculum. Many parents and carers spoke highly of the way that you have supported their children's learning and kept them informed about school life during the pandemic.
- You developed effective systems for delivering remote learning. You also ensured that all pupils had the necessary electronic equipment to access the online curriculum when the school was closed to most pupils. As all pupils have returned to school you have seen the positive impact of online learning in pupils' work and their behaviour.
- Pupils told us that they are excited that everybody is back in school and that they are enjoying learning with their friends again. Pupils have returned to school with positive attitudes to their work. However, staff have found that pupils' ability to concentrate for long periods of time has been affected by their time out of school.
- Teachers are using a range of strategies to find out what pupils have remembered and what they have forgotten in mathematics. Their assessments have shown that many pupils were struggling with mental calculations. Teachers spend additional time in each mathematics lesson developing pupils' use and recall of number facts.
- Helping pupils to become fluent readers is a priority for you and the staff team. Staff continued with daily phonics lessons throughout the period when

most pupils were receiving their education remotely. You also provide online reading resources for pupils. Since school reopened to all pupils, staff have continued to provide individual support for those pupils who find reading more difficult. This has helped to ensure that pupils have continued to develop their reading skills.

- Prior to the first national lockdown you had introduced changes to the English and mathematics curriculums. The plans for each of these subjects are well sequenced and have helped staff to provide challenging work for pupils throughout periods when most pupils were learning from home. However, the planning for other subjects, such as geography and history, is imprecise. It does not identify the essential knowledge that pupils are expected to learn in each year group.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND. As school life returns to normal, staff have focused on pupils' well-being and mental health. This has helped pupils with SEND to cope with the challenges that they have faced during the pandemic. It has also helped them to maintain positive attitudes to learning.
- Leaders provide effective support for vulnerable pupils. Staff kept in regular contact with those who were being educated at home during the school's partial closure. This helped to ensure that they continued to engage with their learning. As they have returned to school you have ensured that all pupils continue to benefit from additional help to support their learning and well-being where necessary.
- Governors have provided both support and challenge to you and other school leaders. They worked successfully with you and staff to overcome barriers to pupils' learning during the partial school closures. They have been determined in their efforts to check that pupils have been provided with an education during these periods.
- The local authority has continued to work with you during the school's partial closure during the first part of the spring term. It supported the development of your remote education offer.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We met with groups of pupils to discuss their learning and to hear them read. We also looked at information on the school's website and documentation provided by leaders. We considered the 86 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent

View, including 51 free-text responses. We also reviewed the 38 responses to the 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 Cheshire East. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector