

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



15 March 2021

Mark Golden
Headteacher
Kirkby College
Tennyson Street
Kirkby-in-Ashfield
Nottinghamshire
NG17 7DH

Dear Mr Golden

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Kirkby College

Following my remote inspection with Rachel Tordoff, 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 January 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:

- pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read receive effective support to improve their reading
- leaders check that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are consistently well supported to make progress through the curriculum
- curriculum plans make clear the subject knowledge that pupils need to know and remember, preparing them well for the next stages of their learning.

Context

- The headteacher's appointment was made permanent in September 2019. Several new leaders have joined the school, including an assistant headteacher and subject leaders for English and mathematics. A new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is due to start at the school in the spring term.
- Across the autumn term in 2020, the large majority of pupils were educated in school. A small proportion of pupils in Years 7, 8, 10 and 11 experienced one period of isolation due to COVID-19.
- At the time of this inspection, a large proportion of pupils were being educated at home. This includes over half of all vulnerable pupils. About one quarter of pupils with SEND were attending school in person, including half of all pupils with education, health and care plans.

Main findings

- Leaders are strengthening the school community by celebrating pupils' successes and making sure that leaders, staff and pupils are working towards a common purpose. They are improving the reputation of the school in the local area. Leaders have worked to ensure that pupils have the equipment they need, whether in school or at home, to continue learning in the current circumstances. Staff morale is positive. They are proud to work at the school.
- In September 2020, leaders reverted to a three-year key stage 3 curriculum. Subject leaders are improving the content of the curriculum. This work is at a more advanced stage in some subjects than others. Learning in subjects such as English and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is planned thoughtfully and sequenced well. However, in some subjects leaders have not identified precisely enough the important knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember. The arrangements to check how well pupils have understood what they have learned are not consistently effective in all subjects.

- Some aspects of the curriculum have been reorganised because of COVID-19. In English, for example, some pupils in Year 10 are currently studying poetry instead of a core Shakespeare text. In PSHE, leaders have modified the curriculum so that pupils are currently focused on their resilience, mental well-being and career aspirations. These subjects are well placed to get back on track quickly with the curriculum in the future. However, this is not the case for all subjects.
- Leaders have ensured that remote learning matches pupils' usual range of subjects. They have made sure that vulnerable pupils have the resources they need. Over time, more pupils are engaging with their learning remotely. However, a significant minority of pupils are not meeting the school's expectations. Frequent phone calls and home visits by staff are helping to improve the engagement of some pupils who are less well motivated, including those who are vulnerable.
- Since September 2020, leaders have improved the profile and importance of reading. This approach includes whole-class reading sessions during tutor time. However, some pupils do not read well enough for their age. Leaders have not ensured that these pupils are receiving the well-planned support that they need.
- Pupils in Years 11 and 13 are being supported to plan their next steps in education, employment and training. Leaders have implemented a range of strategies to ensure that these pupils are well informed about the options available to them. Pupils have access to individual and online careers support, including 'Turn-up-Tuesday' clinics. These sessions provide specific support to help pupils complete college applications and write curriculum vitae, for example. Leaders are conducting additional assessments to support the achievement of Year 11 pupils before the end of the school year. The small number of students in the sixth form are on track to complete their vocational courses. The sixth form is set to close at the end of the school year.
- Leaders know the pastoral needs of pupils with SEND well. Most pupils with SEND have access to the same curriculum as other pupils. Some subject leaders have not considered the needs of these pupils well enough. Leaders are not consistently checking that all pupils with SEND are getting the help that they need in all subjects.
- Governors have positive relationships with senior leaders and are well informed. They are knowledgeable about developments taking place at the school. They have supported leaders in checking that pupils' levels of engagement during the current lockdown have improved. However, governors have a weaker understanding about the impact of leaders' work to ensure that pupils with SEND make progress through the curriculum.

- Leaders have forged close links with external providers. They have accessed training and support for senior leaders, pastoral care staff and some subject leaders. These links are beginning to have a positive impact. New initiatives to improve the provision for early readers and pupils with SEND are at a very early stage of development.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, the designated leader for safeguarding, the acting special educational needs coordinator and three subject leaders. Meetings were also held with four members of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative from the Diverse Academies Trust to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We reviewed a number of school policies, including those relating to child protection, and the school's curriculum. We also checked a sample of recorded lessons and examined a selection of minutes from the meetings of the governing body. We looked at 13 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 11 free-text responses, and 39 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 Nottinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector