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Mr Adam Sutton
Moulsecomb Primary School
The Highway
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Dear Mr Sutton

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Moulsecomb Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4–5 February 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection 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 since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in April 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Yasmin Maskatiya

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in April 2019.

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and thereby pupils' outcomes, particularly in key stage 2, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have consistently high expectations of what all pupils can achieve so that they can make strong academic progress
 - insist on high standards of presentation and accuracy in all subjects
 - have the secure subject knowledge required to teach all subjects successfully
 - plan lessons carefully, ensuring that they use equipment and resources effectively so that they enable pupils to learn well.
- Develop the effectiveness of leaders and governors by ensuring that:
 - plans to improve the school focus sufficiently on their intended impact on pupils' achievement so that leaders can be held closely to account
 - judgements about the effectiveness of teaching are closely aligned to the progress that pupils are making in their learning
 - improvements seen in the lower part of the school and in the teaching of mathematics continue to strengthen and spread through the school.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - ensuring that pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, attend school regularly and that persistent absence declines
 - continuing to develop pupils' attitudes to learning and strengthening their resilience and self-confidence so that a greater number are better equipped to learn
 - making sure that staff on the playground are quick to notice when play becomes rough and take swift action to restore order.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 4 to 5 February 2020

Evidence

Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the designated safeguarding lead and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). They also met with a range of leaders, teachers, parents and carers, and pupils. The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair, and representatives from the local authority. Inspectors visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, scrutinised documents and considered records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Context

Following the last inspection in April 2019, the school was issued with an academy order. As yet, no trust has been approved to take on the school.

The number of pupils on roll has fallen. Previously, there were two classes in each year group. Now, the school takes in one class in each year.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

Leaders have made a start on improving the quality of education. They have begun to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve through being clearer about what pupils should learn. However, these subject plans are not yet precise enough. They do not all fully cover the requirements of the national curriculum. Leaders are currently reviewing plans to ensure complete coverage. They have not yet sequenced what content should be taught when for each subject.

Leaders have made progress in developing teachers' subject knowledge. They have done this through subject-specific training. This has meant that there has been some improvement in teachers' capacity to broaden and deepen pupils' learning. This is most evident in how pupils are developing their understanding of mathematics. Pupils' calculation skills, for instance, are improving.

Teachers have a better grasp of what pupils should achieve in each subject. However, their expectations of what pupils in their class should know and be able to do to get there are not consistently high. As a result, learning activities do not stretch pupils' understanding enough. The pace of learning is often too slow for pupils to acquire sufficient knowledge and skills. Teachers still do not routinely insist on high standards of spelling, punctuation and presentation in pupils' work.

Leaders have continued to tackle the root causes of why some pupils do not attend school as well as they should. They have been tenacious in following through on all pupil absence. The SENCo and the welfare lead work closely together to ensure that

the most vulnerable pupils' attendance is carefully monitored. The number of pupils who are frequently absent from school is falling and, overall, there has been an improvement in attendance rates. There is, however, a way to go before all parents make sure that their children attend school regularly.

Pupils' attitudes to school are positive. Leaders have created a culture that is based on warm and respectful relationships. They have ensured that there is a focus on the importance of learning. Pupils show a readiness to learn, following routines well. Some pupils volunteer answers in class but, at times, pupils lack the self-confidence to contribute. Teachers are aware of this. They know there is work to be done to ensure that they challenge pupils to learn more.

Pupils behave well outside of class too. They play in a relaxed and good-humoured way at breaktimes. Staff supervision is active and vigilant. They encourage and support pupils to sort out any difficulties that arise. Pupils on the school council have been instrumental in creating roles, such as 'guardians of the games', to make sure that playtime activities run smoothly. Older pupils take this responsibility seriously. They believe that it has made playtimes much calmer.

The effectiveness of leadership and management at the school

Leaders have a clear set of principles and values that inform the work of the school community. Their aim is to provide a high-quality education for all. This aspiration is not yet a reality for each pupil in the school. In part, but not entirely, this is because, at times, the headteacher has had to devote his energies to dealing with matters related to the academy order and the restructuring of staffing. This has, on occasions, diverted him away from the core business of improving the quality of education.

In their plans, leaders emphasise the importance of being ambitious for what pupils should achieve. They are setting their sights higher and monitoring how well changes are implemented. The impact of these raised expectations can be seen in the recent improvements in pupils' learning and attendance, although both remain low. Governors now hold leaders to better account because they check that agreed changes are happening.

Leaders have put effort and thought into the improvement of the curriculum delivery for older pupils. They have focused on mathematics learning. As a result, teachers are more skilled and knowledgeable in this subject. However, there is still more to do to improve what is taught and when in subjects across the school. The lack of precise focus on curriculum content to date hinders pupils remembering what they learn and building on their knowledge.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders have created the right climate for learning. They have improved pupils' attitudes, as well as their standards of behaviour. Pupils want to learn. They feel safe and secure at school.
- Leaders have welcomed support from outside the school because they are determined to improve.
- Leaders and governors have increasing clarity about what needs to be done to improve pupils' learning.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The quality of the planning and delivery of the curriculum is not strong enough to ensure that all pupils learn well.
- Pupils do not routinely remember their learning. This means that their understanding and skills are not consolidated and do not improve well over time.

External support

The local authority has secured a range of appropriate support for the school. A national leader for education and a local authority adviser have helped leaders and governors to sharpen their approaches to planning and monitoring. The school has participated in local networks of schools that have helped subject leaders understand the importance of careful curriculum planning.