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Dear Mr Sutton

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Moulsecoomb Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Daniel Lambert, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on Wednesday 24 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 have serious weaknesses.

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 have serious weaknesses at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in April 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:

- ensure that leaders have the knowledge and skills needed to develop a curriculum which is sequenced logically and sets out precisely what pupils in each year group will learn.

Context

- There have been no changes to key staff or governors since the previous monitoring inspection in February 2020.
- Approximately a quarter of pupils were required to self-isolate at different times during the autumn term 2020 and were educated remotely as a result. No classes or 'bubbles' of pupils had to self-isolate during this period.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately four fifths of pupils were being educated remotely. About half of all vulnerable pupils, and almost all pupils with an education, health and care plan, were being educated on site.

Main findings

- Leaders took swift action at the start of the current lockdown to ensure that pupils at home were able to access learning. For example, they made sure that all pupils learning remotely had a laptop to use, internet access, and paper learning packs where needed.
- The school's remote education provision includes a wide range of reading, writing, mathematics and topic activities, and daily phonics activities for the younger pupils. When planning activities, teachers give careful thought to resources that pupils are likely to have at home. This ensures that all pupils can access learning, and most do.
- Curriculum development is a high priority for the school. Ofsted's monitoring inspection of the school in February 2020 identified significant weaknesses in the curriculum. Pupils were not learning well enough as a result. Leaders sensibly refocused improvement plans to address these weaknesses. However, their work has been hindered by the pandemic. For example, training to support leaders in securing improvements has been unavoidably postponed. Work to ensure that curriculum plans set out precisely what pupils will learn in each year group continues to be a prime concern for school improvement.
- Leaders are absolutely committed to doing all they can to ensure that every pupil engages with learning during the current lockdown. They act quickly if they have any concerns about pupils' well-being, contacting parents and following the school's safeguarding procedures if required. Strong relationships with parents have helped leaders to support pupils and their families very effectively. For example, weekly calls, texts and home visits mean that vulnerable pupils continue to benefit from valuable academic and essential pastoral support during this uncertain period.

- Leaders are particularly alert to the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as other pupils identified by the school as vulnerable. They make sure that these pupils are taught by staff who are familiar with pupils' needs. This has ensured that targeted support for individual pupils has continued uninterrupted during the pandemic so that they continue to learn successfully. Additional arrangements, such as extra time during the school day for pupils to discuss their work with a member of staff, help to ensure that pupils' needs remain at the forefront of the school's work, whether learning at home or in school.
- Plans to develop and refine the delivery of the school's reading programme have been hampered by the pandemic. There is some expertise in the teaching of reading in the school. However, delays in staff training mean that not all teachers are as knowledgeable about how to teach the new reading programme as they might be. Leaders intend to address this issue as early as practicable.
- The school is currently providing a wide range of reading activities for pupils learning in school and at home. Pupils are encouraged to read often, and teachers read to all pupils, whether at home or in school, at least once a day. Regular opportunities for pupils to discuss books with a teacher help to ensure that pupils continue to develop their understanding of texts.
- Governors use leaders' presentations and reports well to challenge and support school leaders. For example, during the past year they have used discussions with leaders to consider whether steady improvements in attendance over time have been sufficient, and whether the recent uptick in attendance is likely to be sustained. Governors are aware that significant improvements in the curriculum are needed in the future.
- The local authority's support for the school has continued throughout the past year. Local authority officers have helped leaders to shape the school's remote education offer, as well as providing clear advice about school development. Officers rightly recognise that the pandemic has hampered the school's work to secure improvements in the curriculum and in pupils' learning. They have rightly identified the need to work with leaders in the future to help them to review and improve the curriculum.

Evidence

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

We also looked at curriculum plans and samples of pre-recorded lessons and pupils' work. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 10 free-text responses, and 24 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 Brighton and Hove. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Sackett
Her Majesty's Inspector