

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



25 May 2021

Adam Sutton  
Headteacher  
Moulsecomb Primary School  
The Highway  
Moulsecomb  
Brighton  
East Sussex  
BN2 4PA

Dear Mr Sutton

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Moulsecomb Primary School**

Following my visit with Clive Close, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 5 and 6 May 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 to improve the school since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection that took place in April 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. We discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in our evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

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

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 reports website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Sackett  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 May 2021**

### **Context**

The school is in the early stages of the academisation process. Arrangements for the school to join the Pioneer Academy Trust are under way.

### **The progress made towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation**

The headteacher is steering the school through an unsettled period with care and sensitivity. His aspirations for the school and its pupils remain high. However, the headteacher's current focus on a range of issues is diverting his attention away from securing improvements in the school. These issues include making sure that pupils settle back into school quickly, managing a staff restructuring and leading the school through the academisation process.

Leaders had made a start in improving the curriculum prior to the pandemic. Teachers' expectations were increasing, and training was helping to deepen teachers' understanding of how to support pupils in different subjects. Careful sequencing of the mathematics curriculum meant that pupils were learning the right things in a sensible order. Improvements in mathematics have been sustained and are well established across the school. However, the pandemic has hampered plans to secure further important improvements in other subjects. Therefore, significant weaknesses in the curriculum remain. Leaders have not yet sequenced the content to be taught in subjects other than mathematics well enough.

The reading curriculum lacks sufficient detail and clarity about what should be taught, when, and why. A consistent approach to phonics teaching during the early years continues to support early reading skills well. However, the teaching of reading in the older year groups does not build sufficiently on this secure start. Leaders had begun to improve the reading curriculum before the pandemic. For example, the introduction of a new reading programme was helping to promote a love of reading through the use of high-quality books. However, leaders have not yet thought carefully enough about when and how these books will be used. Delays in staff training caused by the pandemic have hindered the consistent delivery of the school's reading programme. For example, pupils sometimes have too few opportunities to practise reading skills by reading for themselves during reading lessons. Staff training in the teaching of reading is high on the local authority's agenda for future support. School leaders have made sure that developments in reading are at the forefront of their plans for improvement.

Some pupils have fallen behind in their learning during the pandemic. This includes some pupils who have significant weaknesses in their reading skills. Leaders are acutely aware of the need to ensure that these pupils are provided with swift and

effective support. This is particularly important for those pupils in Year 6 who will move to secondary schools in the autumn. Leaders have put some initial support in place. For example, some pupils who read little during the recent lockdown are now reading to an adult every day, while others are benefiting from specialist support.

Urgent adjustments to the school's post-lockdown curriculum have supported pupils well as they return to school. Careful thought has been given to how the curriculum is ensuring that pupils continue to learn a broad range of subjects while catching up with key learning after the recent lockdown. Governors are well informed about developments. The chair of governors meets with the headteacher regularly online. She and her fellow governors continue to support and challenge leaders well.

Some subject leaders had begun to attend leadership training prior to the pandemic. This helped them to secure improvements in the teaching of some subjects, most notably mathematics. However, while the school continued to deliver an element of staff training during the pandemic, most was postponed. As a result, the quality of subject leadership remains variable. Subject leaders are keen to play their role in the school's development but are unsure about how they can help to secure improvements in the curriculum. The local authority has prioritised the provision of training for subject leaders and this will be delivered as soon as practicable.

Leaders have made sensible adjustments to the school improvement plan in response to the pandemic. The plan continues to provide a secure framework for school development. However, some subject-specific action plans are less helpful. For example, the reading action plan lacks the detail and clarity about planned actions required to support improvement.

Improvements in pupils' behaviour noted at the time of the February 2020 monitoring inspection have been maintained. Most pupils have settled back into school routines quickly after the national lockdown. Pupils follow the rules and move around the school calmly and quietly. Some pupils find it hard to stay focused during lessons and a few struggle to act sensibly during playtimes. However, staff provide timely and sensitive support for those pupils who find it difficult to behave consistently well. This includes appropriate support for those pupils with specific emotional and behavioural needs.

The headteacher and his leadership team work hard to make sure that all pupils are in school regularly. They have developed strong pastoral procedures which support vulnerable pupils' attendance well. Warm and professional relationships developed with parents underpin the school's work to support pupils' attendance. A strong focus on pupils' safety and personal well-being at the start of the autumn term helped pupils to settle back into school life. All pupils returned to school after the recent lockdown and leaders can point to significant improvements in individual pupils' attendance. Positive responses to Ofsted Parent View illustrate the school's success in earning parents' trust.

## **Additional support**

The local authority's support for the school has continued throughout the pandemic by, for example, keeping in touch with the headteacher and, more recently, supporting leaders in planning a post-lockdown recovery curriculum. The local authority officer has checked that the school's plans for improvement remain fit for purpose.

The headteacher values the local authority's support. He and his team have made sensible use of advice and resources provided by a range of local authority services, such as the local authority's traveller service, a local authority attendance strategy, the behaviour and support service and the social, emotional and mental health team.

## **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. They met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, a group of pupils, the chair of the governing body and a local authority representative.