

Battle and Langton Church of England Primary School

Market Road, Battle, East Sussex, TN33 0HQ

Inspection dates 24–25 November 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has a strong vision for the future of the school and aspires for excellence. Under his leadership, the school has improved rapidly.
- School leaders and governors form a strong partnership for improvement. Together, they are determined to make the advances required to make this an outstanding school.
- Self-evaluation and improvement planning are a strength, ensuring leaders focus resources and energies on the right areas for improvement.
- Teaching is good. Teachers plan activities that excite and interest pupils. Consequently, pupils engage well and are keen to learn, making good progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils of all abilities and from differing backgrounds are supported well and challenged to do their best, including children in the early years.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. They know they are expected to work hard at school in order to achieve their best.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who are disabled or have special educational needs are making better progress and catching up with other pupils.
- The early years provision has seen dramatic improvement. Most children now leave the Reception year well prepared for Year 1.
- The school's values-based ethos promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Teaching support staff are used effectively and contribute well to the progress pupils make. This is especially the case for the outcomes of pupils with higher levels of additional need.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough pupils are exceeding more than the progress expected of them as writers.
- Teachers who are specialist subject leaders do not play a full enough role in supporting other teachers to raise the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding.
- Despite a strong values-based culture, pupils' knowledge and understanding of diversity and the multi-ethnicity and multi-faith aspect of life in modern Britain needs to be better developed.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of subject leadership so that more teaching becomes outstanding and outcomes for pupils are further improved.
- Improve the quality of teaching of writing in order for pupils to make more progress.
- Develop the curriculum further to give pupils more opportunities to understand diversity and the multi-ethnicity, multi-faith aspects of life in modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since his appointment, the headteacher has worked tirelessly and with great energy and self-belief to improve this school. He has a strong vision for the future and leads the school with focus and determination. Because of this, he has the overwhelming backing of staff and governors. Most importantly, he has the respect of parents, who were very clear about their support during the inspection.
- The wider senior leadership team are able and confident. They act well together to support the headteacher in order to bring about the improvements required in all aspects of the school. Between them they have a good blend of experience and skills and are confident in their abilities to bring about improvements within their own areas of responsibility.
- Middle leadership, particularly the contribution made by subject leaders to improving the quality of teaching, needs to be more effective. Senior leaders are aware of this and have started the move to a more distributive approach to leadership, especially with regard to monitoring, supporting and challenging teachers to improve their practice to become outstanding.
- Self-evaluation is honest and a great strength. Leaders have identified the areas that require further development to improve outcomes for pupils. Because of this, improvement planning is sound and prioritises those areas that matter most.
- School leaders are well aware of the quality of teaching in each phase of the school. Professional development is prioritised in order to address teachers' developmental needs, while remaining firmly grounded in the school's own priorities for improvement. These priorities are also supported through the robust performance management of teachers, with targets clearly linked to improving outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils benefit from an exciting and stimulating curriculum which is enhanced by themed days or weeks and timetabled sessions allocated to class teachers to step away from more traditional activities and lessons. A recent 'take over' day where Year 6 pupils took over teaching, caretaking and the roles of office and teaching support staff was a great success.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted in a number of ways, including themed projects about Chinese New Year or the Mexican Day of the Dead celebration, for instance. Workshops on racial awareness have also proved useful.
- The school's wider curriculum and its values-based ethos of love, joy, kindness, patience, peace and self-control, ensure pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. However, school leaders acknowledge that pupils would benefit from a broader knowledge of religious and ethnic diversity and are exploring ways to introduce this more fully into the curriculum.
- Additional government funding to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is spent well. The impact of interventions and extra support given to disadvantaged pupils is closely monitored by school leaders to ensure that these pupils make the progress required. Recent rapid improvements for disadvantaged pupils in the early years and in phonics provision are testament to this, as were the outcomes for pupils in Key Stage 1 this year.
- The school makes good use of the extra funding given to promote physical education and sports in primary schools. Teachers and support staff have benefited from bespoke training and pupils are more involved in sporting activities including a range of lunchtime or after-school sports clubs. The school is also involved in the local schools' games partnership to provide pupils with opportunities to take part in competitive sport.
- Parents who spoke or wrote to inspectors, or responded to the online questionnaire Parent View, were overwhelmingly positive about the school. They expressed confidence in the leadership and management of the school and appreciate the good communication and high profile and visibility of school leaders.
- School leaders and governors benefit from good-quality support from the local authority. The impact of this is clear to see in classrooms and in improving outcomes for pupils. Advisers and consultants have worked closely with the school to provide a wide range of training and advice. This includes support in the early years and for the provision for pupils with complex additional needs. The teaching and subject leadership of mathematics and school self-evaluation and improvement planning have also benefitted from this partnership.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors know the school well and carry out their duties with a great degree of dedication. They maintained a high profile throughout the inspection, keen to show their support and play their part in ensuring that the school was seen in its best light.

- The governing body collectively draws on a wide range of knowledge and skills from the different professions and backgrounds represented within its ranks. It actively recruits to fill any gaps in expertise and ensures that members are up to date by brokering the training required to enable it to hold school leaders properly to account.
- Link governors have responsibilities for key areas of the school and closely follow a detailed monitoring programme in order to gain knowledge and insight into the quality of provision. Information sharing between governors is good, ensuring that all governors have a clear overview in order that the governing body can execute its collective duties well.
- Governors maintain an eyes-on, hands-off approach and have been careful to operate in a strategic manner, rather than become embroiled in the day-to-day running of the school. This has allowed school leaders to concentrate on what needs to be done to improve the school, whilst benefiting from timely challenge and support offered by the governing body as a whole.
- The arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are effective. Policies and practices are up to date and all staff have been appropriately trained for the level of responsibility they hold. Staff take their collective responsibility seriously.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching is consistently good across all year groups. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and outcomes for them are good. Teachers have high expectations. They expect pupils to do well. One Year 6 pupil told the lead inspector 'Hard work is rewarded in this school.'
- Because teachers have good subject knowledge, they are able to draw on a number of strategies to support and challenge pupils to achieve their best. This was especially apparent in the 'Pod', a dedicated provision that supports those pupils with complex additional needs, where inspectors witnessed high quality teaching that ensured pupils achieved small steps to success, representing good progress.
- Pupils told inspectors they enjoy the challenge afforded to them by the new 'three star' system that teachers use to ensure work is set at an appropriate level. Evidence seen in pupils' work books showed this to be working well, with additional challenge set for the most-able pupils in order to deepen their understanding.
- Teachers use a variety of methods to ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve. The quality of verbal feedback, including directed questioning during lessons was generally sound, but there were occasions when inspectors thought that opportunities to stretch the learning were missed.
- The school uses its teaching support staff well and has a flexible approach to deploying them where they are needed most. Because of this, pupils who need help receive it. This includes those pupils who the school has identified as falling behind, who receive targeted support in order for them to catch up.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is good, but outcomes in writing are weaker than those in reading. The standard of grammar, punctuation and spelling also had a negative impact on outcomes in writing in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 this year. Actions taken by the school to address this, including increased opportunities to write across the curriculum, a focus on quality not quantity in writing, and simple changes to timetabling are already having an impact on this aspect of teaching and the progress pupils make.
- The standard of teaching in the wider curriculum is a strength. The school environment is a delight of art, creativity and exhibits of pupils' work. A display proclaiming, 'It's not that you can't do it – you just can't do it yet', sums up the mind-set of teaching in this school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are confident and proud of their school. They understand that they come to school to learn, but that learning isn't just about mathematics and English.
- Pupils display a high degree of maturity and independence for their age, including those in lower year groups. Their relationships with teachers and other adults in the school are well-developed and built on trust and respect.
- The school's values-based culture works well in supporting pupils in their interactions with each other. During an English lesson, pupils broke into spontaneous applause when one of their classmates read their

work to the class.

- Pupils told inspectors they feel safe in school and that adults care about them. They were able to explain how the school helps to keep them safe through specific lessons about e-safety or cyber-bullying for instance, or by taking part in local or national initiatives including anti-bullying week.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who expressed a view on the online questionnaire, Parent View, responded that their children were happy, felt safe and were looked after well at school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. At no time in the inspection did inspectors see any behaviour that would cause concern.
- Pupils display good manners and conduct themselves well when moving around the school. They play and interact with each other cooperatively. Social skills are well-developed. They told inspectors they feel safe in the playground and other areas of the school.
- Behaviour seen in classrooms was never less than very good. Because teaching meets the needs of learners well, pupils are engaged and inspired to do their best.
- Attendance is broadly in line with national averages. The school is very aware that the attendance of some vulnerable groups needs to be monitored closely to ensure that absence doesn't have a negative impact on the progress these pupils make. Persistent absence is low.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' outcomes are good. Pupils in nearly all year groups make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Current progress in reading, writing and mathematics, as confirmed during classroom observations by inspectors, evidence in pupils' books and from information provided by the school, is good.
- The progress children make in the early years is good, especially when considering their different starting points. Many more of them are now well-prepared for their move into Year 1 with the number achieving a good level of development well above the average seen in schools nationally.
- The phonics skills of younger pupils are improving, but still not quite matching standards seen nationally in the Year 1 phonics screening check. By the end of Year 2, most children have caught up, with the school achieving just above the national average.
- Outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 2 this year broadly match those seen in national tests and assessments in English and mathematics, although results in reading, which were above the national average, were stronger than writing, which were below. This represents very good progress for this particular cohort when measured from their starting point as they entered Year 1.
- Outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 6 also match national results in reading, writing and mathematics. The percentage of pupils achieving higher levels at the end of Year 6 compares favourably with that seen nationally in reading and just behind national averages in writing and mathematics.
- The expected progress made by pupils between Year 2 and Year 6 matches that seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. This is also the case for disadvantaged pupils in reading and writing. In mathematics, all disadvantaged pupils made the progress expected of them this year.
- The numbers of pupils exceeding expected progress between Year 2 and Year 6 in reading and mathematics was also in line with national averages. This was also the case with disadvantaged pupils. However, the number of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, exceeding the progress expected of them in writing, was below that seen nationally. School leaders have already started to address this.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good. The progress of those pupils with severe and complex needs is also good due to the excellent provision and high levels of expertise offered by teachers and teaching support staff. Those that do not attain highly still make good progress from their different starting points.

Early years provision

is good

- The quality of provision in the Reception Year is good. Children join the school from a wide range of backgrounds and with varying levels of knowledge and skills. Because of the good care and nurturing

environment, they quickly settle to school life and enjoy the opportunities to learn offered to them.

- The early years provision is led and managed very well. Rapid improvements have been made in a relatively short period of time. Most children now leave the Reception classes well prepared for Year 1.
- This year, eight out of ten children achieved a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year. This is an impressive improvement on levels seen two years ago when less than two in ten achieved a good level of development.
- Teaching is good and has been fundamental in improved outcomes for children. The use of teaching support staff also has good impact on the progress children make. Training, both internal and externally sourced, has helped staff develop their skills and understanding of child development, ensuring that children of different abilities are challenged appropriately.
- Communication between staff is a strength and a lot of work goes into ensuring that the progress of each child is monitored carefully. Inspectors found good evidence of recording small steps in learning and the planning of next steps, leading to further progress for children. This information is also shared well with parents in order for them to support their children in partnership with the school.
- The environment for learning is well-developed. Children benefit from well-planned activities both within and outside the classroom. Opportunities to deepen children's understanding are generally acted on well by staff, whilst an appropriate degree of independent learning is also encouraged.
- An inspector was pleased to be offered a pair of wellington boots to join a group of children making use of the outside area, including walking through the mud. During this activity, children were encouraged to be independent when putting on coats and boots and to count carefully as they lined up. Most-able pupils were challenged to count into double figures, or use their number skills to work out how many children were missing. Songs were sung and children invited to explain why the ground was muddy. At every stage, and despite the mud, children listened and behaved well, enjoying well-designed opportunities to learn whilst having fun.
- Leaders ensure that children from disadvantaged backgrounds make good progress in the early years. Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is spent wisely. Because of this, the percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving a good level of development is now in line with other children nationally and is closing rapidly with other children within the school.
- Children feel safe in the Reception classes. They are confident and outgoing and were happy to share their ideas and experiences with inspectors. Staff ensure that activities are safe, but allow children to take risks in their learning and play.
- Parents are very positive about the early years provision. They are happy with how well their children have settled into school. They also appreciate the good levels of communication and willingness of staff to discuss the needs of their children when they have concerns.

School details

Unique reference number	114489
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10000493

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	450
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Cutting
Headteacher	Simon Hughes
Telephone number	01424 775987
Website	www.battlelangton.e-sussex.sch.uk
Email address	office@battlelangton.e-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 February 2012

Information about this school

- Battle and Langton Church of England Primary School is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding) is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who have statements of special education need or an education, health and care plan is much higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs at school support level is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils whose first language is not believed to be English is much lower than the national average.
- Children in the school's Reception classes attend full time.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons across the school, five jointly with school leaders.
- The lead inspector conducted a learning walk around the school accompanied by the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, parents, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, middle leaders and governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Telephone conversations were also held with a governor and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, heard pupils read, observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school and at breaktimes and talked informally with pupils.
- Inspectors carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work jointly with the school's leaders of English and mathematics.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account the 125 responses on the online parent questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered the freetext question responses submitted by parents. Responses to the 43 questionnaires returned by staff were also considered.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including those to do with safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of visits by the local authority, information about pupils' outcomes supplied by the school, the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school's improvement plan.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rosemary Addison	Ofsted Inspector
Rosemary Beattie	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Bruce Waelend	Ofsted Inspector

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