

West St Leonards Primary Academy

Harley Shute Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN38 8BX

Inspection dates

18–19 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have developed a culture of very high expectations and aspiration based around the 'Pride of West St Leonards' values that are shared consistently by pupils, staff and parents.
- Senior leaders have trained other leaders in the school well, empowering them to successfully lead improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Teaching is typically outstanding across the school. This enables pupils to make faster progress in their learning in a range of different subjects.
- The curriculum is inclusive, varied and interesting. Pupils have opportunities to try out new experiences and learn different skills in school and in the local area.
- Pupils' personal development during their time at the school is a strength. They become mature and respectful citizens and behave exceptionally well in class.
- Both the local governing body and Hastings Academies Trust provide school leaders with highly effective support and challenge.
- The school's procedures to keep pupils safe from harm are robust and effective.
- Children make an outstanding start to school life in the Reception classes.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is very strong. These pupils make good progress from their often very low starting points.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and what it is trying to achieve for their children. As one parent said, 'I am very happy and proud to say my child attends this school.'
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most able, is improving. Nonetheless, in some year groups they are not catching up with their peers quickly enough.
- Pupils do not achieve as well as others nationally in the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- In recent years pupils have made much faster progress through key stage 2 in writing than they have in reading and mathematics.
- Attendance is stubbornly low. Leaders are making every possible effort to improve this, especially with families where rates of absence are particularly high.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should check that all groups make rapid progress from their starting points, and specifically ensure that:
 - the remaining differences in attainment for disadvantaged pupils diminish quickly
 - key stage 2 pupils make as much progress in reading and mathematics as they do in writing
 - the overwhelming majority of Year 1 pupils meet the required standard in the phonics screening check.
- Further develop the relentless focus on improving attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The principal sets high standards and aspirations for all of her pupils, irrespective of their background or ability. She believes that all pupils can achieve well and has the expectation that they will.
- Similarly, the expectations on teachers in this school are high. Led ably by the vice-principal, they reflect continually upon their work as a highly motivated team looking to make constant improvements to their teaching. This persistent determination to improve their practice has led to teaching in the school now being typically outstanding.
- This success in improving teaching and learning has not come about by accident. Rigorous checks by senior leaders on the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment show a real attention to detail. As a result of these checks, the school's self-evaluation is accurate.
- Strengths and relative weaknesses in teaching are identified by leaders and fed into the school's comprehensive training programmes. Teachers learn from each other as well as wider research and expertise.
- Senior leaders identify talented teachers within the school and give them opportunities to develop and become effective leaders. They learn and develop the necessary skills by attending nationally recognised training programmes and by working alongside experienced leaders in teams.
- These teams have key responsibilities for areas such as English and mathematics and are having a greater impact on raising standards. Newer leaders are passionate about the work they do and the actions they have taken, but do not always talk concisely about the impact they have had.
- Leadership of the facility for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is outstanding. The provision for these pupils is a strength of the school because they thrive both in the facility during the mornings and in mainstream classes each afternoon.
- Pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent effectively. The school ensures that disadvantaged pupils do not fall further behind their peers. Older disadvantaged pupils actually make accelerated progress to diminish the differences in attainment with their peers through carefully planned additional support.
- The school's very interesting curriculum allows pupils to apply their writing skills, try out a wide range of experiences and learn about the local area. For example, each autumn all pupils learn about a woodland topic and regular visits to the beach are also made.
- Pupils also learn about the wider world by discussing global issues. Older pupils develop a deep understanding of issues such as racism and can clearly explain why everyone at West St Leonards, whatever their background, is treated equally.
- The Pride of West St Leonards 'POW' awards celebrate pupils who demonstrate 12 key values regularly, including self-control, resilience, empathy, honesty and

thoughtfulness. These values help the school to run smoothly and prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education and life in modern Britain.

- Additional government funding for sport and PE is used effectively. Sports coaches help pupils to develop their skills while also showing teachers how to teach these skills more effectively themselves. A large proportion of pupils take part in extra-curricular and competitive sport and this success has been recognised through the achievement of a Gold School Games Mark.
- Parents are very happy with the school and its leadership. They value the many opportunities they have to develop their knowledge to help their children. For example, recent workshops on the teaching of phonics and a 'stay and learn' session for parents of younger pupils during the inspection were well attended.
- Support and challenge from the Hastings Academies Trust is effective. Visiting advisors have rightly identified relevant things that the school should improve further, such as analysing the progress pupils make from their starting points. School leaders usually respond swiftly to this advice.
- Senior leaders have a broader impact within the Hastings Academies Trust. They support other schools to improve the quality of teaching when needed and influence wider policy. For example, when the principal was frustrated by the fact that trust policy did not allow her to take more decisive action to tackle poor attendance, she convinced the board to change their procedures.
- Given the many strengths across the school, leaders should now focus more sharply on the progress pupils make from their starting points to improve outcomes overall.

Governance of the school

- The local governing body is effectively led by a knowledgeable and experienced chair. They have a broad range of skills and expertise that allows them to challenge and support school leaders appropriately. They know they can also seek further advice from the Hastings Academies Trust, from where they also receive relevant training.
- Governors receive a regular informative report from the principal, but this does not currently give them information about the progress different pupils are making from their starting points. However, governors clearly understand the information they receive about the attainment of different groups, and ask school leaders challenging questions about this and the school's actions to improve attendance.
- Governors visit the school regularly to monitor and evaluate the progress that is being made against the school's key priorities for improvement. They are very proactive in ensuring that safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a culture where the safety of pupils has a high priority because they know that if pupils do not feel safe, they do not learn well. Those responsible for safeguarding frequently reflect on their practice and make continual improvements to their systems and procedures following the regular training they attend or changes to national guidance.
- Staff and volunteers receive the same high level of safeguarding training when they

join the school. There is regular and varied training after this to ensure that all staff know how to take action if they believe a pupil is in any unsafe situation.

- Systems to keep records about the most vulnerable pupils are robust. There is clear evidence of the school working well with other professionals to protect pupils from harm. However, school leaders are not afraid to challenge other agencies when they do not believe they are doing enough to keep pupils safe.
- Improvements to the security of the school site over recent years mean that it is a very safe place to learn and work.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Expectations in all classrooms are very high and pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils are exceptionally proud to talk about their work, which they find interesting and challenging. As one pupil told an inspector, 'High expectations help us build our character.'
- Teachers have very secure subject knowledge and often ask pupils challenging questions to make them think deeply. They use time wisely to make sure that opportunities for pupils to make progress are maximised.
- Pupils are known as individuals and teachers use assessment information and their own observations to plan and adapt the next steps in learning for everyone. This rigour ensures that any pupils at risk of falling behind are quickly identified and additional or specific teaching can be provided if needed.
- The school's policy to provide detailed written feedback to pupils is applied consistently well. It is very clear and has a very noticeable impact on pupils' progress, especially in writing. Pupils say that their feedback in mathematics often challenges them to think carefully about what they have learned or to apply their skills to solve a new problem.
- Additional adults support those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities exceptionally well. A range of approaches are used both in the facility and in the mainstream classrooms to ensure that these pupils are challenged to reach the high aspirations they set for themselves, such as being an Olympian or a zoo keeper.
- The teaching of writing is exemplary. Teachers use a structured, cross-curricular approach that makes use of high-quality texts and develops high-level vocabulary exceptionally well. Teachers regularly demonstrate their approach to colleagues from other schools.
- Writing skills are applied well in other subjects such as science and humanities. The focus on language and communication across the curriculum is a key element of the strong teaching that inspectors observed.
- The school's own assessment information shows that the high-quality teaching of writing leads to pupils making rapid progress in this area. Teachers check their judgements about this with other schools in the Hastings Academies Trust, and have them formally verified by the local authority.
- Teaching in mathematics lessons has an increased focus on pupils developing their skills of problem-solving and reasoning. Younger pupils, and those still grappling with

their understanding of number, are provided with suitable practical and visual resources to help develop their understanding.

- In the mathematics lessons observed during the inspection, pupils made informed choices about the level of challenge they chose. They were proud to try and succeed when tackling the more difficult questions; for example, in Year 6 pupils were confidently handling problems that required them to multiply fractions together.
- Both teachers and teaching assistants are skilled at teaching phonics accurately. During the inspections pupils made impressive progress in their phonics lessons because of this. However, the proportion of pupils who achieve the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check each year is below that found nationally.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to reading. They try hard to live up to the school's challenge of reading at home seven days a week. Pupils show resilience to finish more challenging books. Pupils are taught skills to comprehend and analyse a varied and challenging range of texts. However some pupils felt that the feedback they get from teachers to help them improve their reading was not as helpful as in other subjects.
- In a small number of lessons observed by inspectors, a few pupils could have been moved on to more challenging work or given additional guidance to support their learning more quickly.
- Parents are confident that their children are taught well. While one or two parents mentioned there was too much homework, the vast majority who completed the Parent View survey felt that their child received appropriate homework for their age.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning and are always well prepared for lessons. They take great pride in their work and use special bookmarks in English and mathematics to show the latest piece of work they are especially proud of.
- Pupils feel they are very safe in school. They have adults to talk to about any concerns. Vulnerable pupils and those who are worried feel well supported by staff that help them to manage their feelings and behaviour.
- The wide range of extra-curricular clubs, opportunities to compete against other schools and well-planned PE lessons contribute well to pupils' physical well-being. Pupils are encouraged to make healthy eating choices at break and lunchtime as well as in the breakfast and after-school clubs.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of what bullying is. Their understanding of cyber bullying and how to stay safe online is very strong. Pupils talk convincingly about how to keep safe and can explain how incidents are dealt with robustly.
- Pupils are encouraged to think carefully about difficult issues such as racism and refugees. Suitable resources are used to challenge pupils' thinking and assemblies cover a wide range of moral and global issues. Pupils sensibly reflect on issues and

show great care for those less fortunate than themselves. They say that everyone is welcome at their 'friendly' school, whatever their background.

- Special roles such as peer mediators, learning and business ambassadors, librarians, newspaper editors and school councillors give pupils opportunities to take responsibility for important areas of school life. Peer mediators explained the significance of their role and how there isn't much they can't help other pupils to solve. Only rarely do they need adult help to sort playground issues.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Each pupil took part in the democratic vote to choose the school vision of 'Excellent Learning and Friendship'. Pupils fondly refer to this as 'Elf' and it certainly reminds them to behave and learn well.
- Pupils consistently live up to the high expectations set in class. Behaviour in lessons during the inspection was often impeccable and pupils confirmed that this is the norm.
- Parents and staff who completed online surveys confirm that pupils behave well at school. One parent told inspectors that the school helps pupils 'to learn to their potential and become well-mannered and rounded young individuals'.
- Of course, there are some pupils who find it more difficult to behave appropriately. The school has a clear and systematic approach to managing their behaviour that has very positive results. Pupils talk about their friends in class who have been helped to quickly improve their behaviour and attitude to learning.
- Around the school, pupils walk smartly and are polite and welcoming to visitors, often holding doors open for them even if they are going a different way.
- While not as impeccable as in class, behaviour in the dining hall and playground is still impressive. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, eat together sensibly. When pupils finish playing at the end of lunchtime, they calmly and helpfully put away equipment.
- A few girls expressed concerns about the behaviour of a small number of pupils outside of lessons. However, they said it was of a very low level and dealt with really well by adults.
- Overall attendance is low compared to all schools nationally. Systems to try to improve attendance are rigorous. Inspectors could see that every possible action is taken to improve attendance for families who do not attend regularly. The principal takes a lead in monitoring attendance and has effected changes in the trust's attendance policy so she can challenge this further.
- The majority of pupils who previously had very high rates of absence have improved their attendance because of the effective and tailored work of the school. These pupils now attend more regularly and are making good progress in their learning.
- Pupils and parents are clear that they must arrive at school on time. Rare lateness is challenged.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils currently in the school make good progress towards achieving the new, challenging national curriculum expectations. Evidence seen in pupils' books by inspectors supports this.
- Accurate assessments show that current rates of progress are now broadly similar in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Since the recent introduction of new assessment systems, disadvantaged pupils make at least as much progress as other pupils in the school in reading, writing and mathematics. The strongest progress for this group is in Years 4, 5 and 6 because this is where the majority of pupil premium funding is spent. Elsewhere in the school the differences in attainment for this group are not diminishing quickly enough.
- The most able pupils make good progress from their starting points to demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding beyond that expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. This is also the case for the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- From their starting points, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least good progress because of the specific and individualised programmes they follow to meet their needs.
- All pupils usually make at least good progress in their lessons because of the highly effective teaching and the way teachers use assessment information to skilfully plan challenging tasks.
- Those pupils who have left West St Leonards in recent years have been well prepared for their secondary education because of the knowledge, skills, values and temperament they possess. However, they did not all make fast enough progress during their time at the school, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Standards in reading across the school are improving because of the effective teaching of phonics, the school's policy to encourage daily reading and the successful use of specific interventions to help pupils that find reading most difficult. Despite these strengths, results in the Year 1 phonics screening check remain below average.
- Parents are happy with the information they receive about the progress their children are making, the vast majority believe that their child is making good progress. As one parent said, 'My child is encouraged to thrive and at times challenged in her learning, which gives her a great sense of achievement.'

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year is above national figures and continuing to rise. Children make accelerated progress from sometimes low starting points in all areas of learning
- Leadership in the early years has been highly effective in ensuring that previous gaps in attainment between girls and boys have narrowed quickly. Boys are now making accelerated progress from their generally lower starting points to catch up with girls in most areas of learning.

- More girls than boys exceed the early learning goals, but this is because their starting points are often higher. Girls and boys make similar progress.
- Disadvantaged children make accelerated progress from their starting points and then continue to thrive when they enter Year 1. Like all the children in the early years, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Expectations, like elsewhere in the school, are high. The classroom environment is set up to promote learning and teachers' careful planning ensures that all children are able to succeed. Assessment systems have rigour and the observations carried out by adults help plan the next challenging activities for children.
- Teachers and adults support children's learning well. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are exceptionally well cared for. The majority of parents appreciate the support their children were given to settle in to school life.
- The welfare requirements in the early years are met. Children already know how to stay safe in the setting.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective. For example, the routines at home time are very clear and ensure that children and parents find each other safely.
- The progress children make in lessons is strong. The teaching of phonics and early writing skills are very effective. During the inspection one class were retelling the story of Goldilocks and the three bears together in unison, using actions and story vocabulary. Their friends in the parallel class enjoyed adapting the same story structure and substituted Goldilocks with a ghost and porridge with hot, warm and cold cakes.
- Leaders agree there is scope to develop more opportunities for reading and writing in the outdoor environment to match the rich learning inside.

School details

Unique reference number	140179
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10019847

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	413
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dennis Smith
Principal	Frances Robinson
Telephone number	01424422080
Website	www.weststleonardsprimaryacademy.org.uk
Email address	office@wslprimaryacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened as an academy on 1 November 2013. It is a member of the Hastings Academies Trust, which is sponsored by the University of Brighton and BT.
- The school is larger than the average primary school and has two classes in each year group.
- The school includes a resourced provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities known as 'the facility'. The facility has space for 12 pupils and there are currently 10 pupils attending who have physical disabilities and/or moderate learning difficulties. These pupils are mostly taught in the facility each morning and attend mainstream classes each afternoon.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is greater than that found nationally.
- The vast majority of pupils are from white British backgrounds.
- Nine teachers have joined the school in the last two years.

- The principal and other school leaders provide support to other schools in the Hastings Academies Trust.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. The school complies with DfE guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school meets the current government floor standards that set out the minimum expectations for primary schools.
- The school runs a breakfast club and after-school childcare which was included in the inspection.
- The school has achieved the Gold School Games Mark and has been accredited as a national training centre for a programme to promote high-quality writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in every class, including the facility, at least once and also made a number of shorter visits to classrooms. Most of these observations were carried out with the principal, vice-principal or other senior leaders.
- Her Majesty's Inspector met with the chair of governors and three other governors (including a director of the Hastings Academies Trust) and also met separately with two representatives from the Hastings Academy Trust.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, vice-principal, other senior leaders, the teams responsible for English and mathematics and a range of other staff.
- To gain their views of the school, inspectors spoke informally with pupils in classrooms and around the school, went on a tour of the school with some pupils and met a group of pupils more formally. Inspectors also heard some pupils in Years 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 read and talked to them about their work. The school did not provide pupils with the online questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation, including documents relating to safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, the achievement of pupils, the quality of teaching and the curriculum.
- In addition to speaking to a number of parents at the start of the first day of the inspection, inspectors considered 77 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire including 45 free-text responses.
- Inspectors considered 26 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Hogarth	Ofsted Inspector
Anne Allen	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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