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Keith Pailthorpe  
Principal  
The Eastbourne Academy  
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Dear Mr Pailthorpe

### **Short inspection of The Eastbourne Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Colin Lankester, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in November 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your passion and drive to provide the best opportunities for pupils is shared by governors, other leaders and staff. You have successfully built leadership capacity among staff and embedded a culture of continual improvement. Leaders have set high expectations of pupils and staff and created an ethos of tolerance and respect. Pupils are immensely proud of their school and are keen to learn. Your emphasis on providing opportunities for pupils to gain leadership skills is a key factor in their positive attitudes about their education. Pupils celebrate the inclusive ethos of the school and are tolerant of each other's differences. As one pupil stated, 'It's a great place as there is so much diversity.'

Since the last inspection, you have successfully tackled the areas for improvement, which were to improve teaching and pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. You and your vice-principals have embedded an effective training programme. As a result, teachers are extending their skills in order to better meet the needs of pupils. Teachers have found different strategies to motivate pupils further and improve their learning. Pupils recognise the improvement in teaching, saying their teachers have high expectations of them and that they are 'pushed hard'.

Leaders' decisive action to improve literacy skills has resulted in pupils making accelerated progress in key stage 3. Pupils join the school with overall levels of

literacy below the national average. Leaders evaluate carefully the school's bespoke programme of literacy intervention so that pupils have individual support. Pupils arriving at the school with few or no English language skills make rapid progress. Overall, pupils leave the school with literacy skills that are broadly average. The focus on numeracy skills has resulted in pupils feeling more confident about mathematics. Pupils report that teachers have made numeracy intervention 'fun' and, as a result, their motivation has increased.

Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate. A recent dip in standards in 2015 was largely due to slow progress in mathematics. Leaders have recognised this and put the right actions in place to rectify the decline. The 2016 results and the progress of current pupils show that the quality of teaching and learning is much improved. Consequently, standards in mathematics for most pupils are rising rapidly. However, there is still work to do to ensure that all pupils' progress is secure, including that of lower-ability girls.

Leaders are developing the curriculum to ensure that it is aspirational for all pupils. This has meant there is more focus on subjects such as humanities.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have established a strong, open culture of safeguarding that permeates the school. Staff have regular training so that they are knowledgeable about procedures to keep their pupils safe. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are efficiently monitored.

Pupils are well supported in understanding how to keep themselves safe and are confident that should they have a concern, it will be dealt with sensitively and effectively by staff.

### **Inspection findings**

- The Eastbourne Academy, a 'stand-alone' academy, is supported by a representative of the Swale Academies Trust as a partner in school improvement. This support has successfully provided a framework for improvement in mathematics. Governors are in discussion to further develop this positive relationship.
- Outcomes for pupils who take languages are good. Results for history and geography have been less successful, but are improving. Leaders have made well-judged changes to the curriculum and rightly aim to increase the proportion of pupils entering for humanities and language GCSEs.
- The teaching of English is strong, with teachers typically having extremely high expectations. They use skilful questioning techniques and are able to accurately match their questions and tasks to meet pupils' needs.
- Overall outcomes for pupils were broadly average in 2016. Pupils enter the school with significantly lower standards of literacy and numeracy than the national average. Leaders and teachers now strategically analyse the actions taken to

support pupils on entry so that they can accelerate their progress in the lower years. This has not always been the case in the past, as teachers focused more on the older year groups to prepare them for examinations.

- Teachers and leaders set ambitious targets for pupils. Teaching is well pitched and pupils have high expectations of themselves. Leaders have developed an effective assessment system, which enables pupils' progress to be tracked regularly and swift action to be taken if progress stalls. Leaders collect information about progress across subjects and year groups in order to make comparisons. Consequently, leaders can make judgements and evaluate the progress of various groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils that are disadvantaged make up nearly half of the school population. Their needs are served well and there is little difference in rates of progress between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Leaders and teachers know their pupils well and are determined that their disadvantaged pupils receive extra support if required. In particular, attendance has significantly improved over time due to individual plans that support disadvantaged pupils well.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported through planned intervention by staff. Vulnerable pupils have access to a nurturing, safe environment during lessons and breaktimes. Pupils remarked that their confidence had grown as a result of the support they receive.
- Parents have positive views about the school. The school's own survey reflects strong support and satisfaction from parents about the progress their children are making. While there were few written responses to the online parental survey provided by Ofsted, they were overwhelmingly positive. For example, one parent stated, 'There is a consistent energy and enthusiasm regarding the pupils' learning and a desire for them to achieve the highest level they can.'
- Leaders have successfully developed a learning community where teachers and pupils flourish. The pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive and low-level disruption is rare. There is a high degree of respect and trust between pupils and their teachers, which results in pupils responding very positively to teachers' feedback on how to improve their learning.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum provides opportunities for all pupils to make the most of their abilities
- the quality of teaching of humanities improves
- lower-ability girls make accelerated progress in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Child  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, your vice-principals, middle leaders, a group of staff, the chair of the governing body and a representative from Swale Academies Trust.

Inspectors met with 22 pupils, representing all age groups. Inspectors heard three Year 9 pupils read. We observed learning in 15 classes, all attended jointly with the principal or vice-principal. We scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and a sample of mathematics books from key stage 3. Inspectors took account of six responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the school's own parental satisfaction survey.

We analysed a range of school documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.