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Dear Mr Harrold

Short inspection of Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form College

Following my visit to the school on 8 February 2017 with Mark Roessler, Ofsted Inspector, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and staff share a clear understanding of the school's strengths and how to improve it further. You are a very reflective leader and, with the leadership team, you analyse and make careful and effective use of information to promote and track improvements. Leaders and the governing body accurately identify areas to improve while regularly reviewing the effectiveness of the actions that leaders and staff take. Governors support leaders well by focusing on particular areas for improvement through a 'deep dive' approach to scrutinising leaders' work. There is a very honest relationship between your governing body and your leadership team and this promotes improvement well.

Leaders have established a culture and ethos which is inclusive, caring and which fosters pupils' good achievement. Pupils and parents recognise how the staff team supports and nurtures pupils well to succeed. Leaders have created a calm and well-organised school where pupils are safe. Relationships between pupils are strong because all are taught to respect one another and diversity is celebrated. Pupils told us that your focus on rewarding pupils' positive behaviour is encouraging more pupils to do the right thing. These actions have created powerful and positive working relationships between staff and pupils. As a result, most parents would recommend this school to others.

Effective leadership of teaching means that the vast majority of pupils make good progress. This includes disadvantaged pupils. You rightly identify the strengths in

middle leadership in English, mathematics and science as some of the main drivers in improving teaching and pupils' achievement. The majority of pupils achieve well and attain outcomes that compare favourably with pupils nationally who have similar starting points. However, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities could do better in some subjects.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors identified that more pupils could make outstanding progress if teachers made better use of information about pupils' achievement when planning lessons. They also found that progress would accelerate if teachers allowed pupils greater opportunities to develop their thinking. You were also asked to ensure that pupils receive effective feedback on their written work in all subjects. GCSE results have improved significantly since the last inspection, in most subjects. This is because staff now use assessment information well to check pupils' learning and match activities well to their different needs. Your new tracking system is helping staff well, to identify where pupils are on their 'flight paths' to achieve well over time and where further support may be required.

Your teaching, learning and assessment policy helps teachers to plan how they support pupils to reflect on their learning, identify what needs to be improved, revisit their work and check their understanding of a topic. This is strengthening pupils' knowledge and understanding. This approach is particularly strong in English and in mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All necessary checks are undertaken in the recruitment of staff and new staff are provided with appropriate safeguarding training. All staff receive regular updates including at the start of the school year. They are aware of the most up-to-date guidance on 'Keeping children safe in education' and know how to pass on any concerns. Governors regularly check school processes and systems for safeguarding. Pupils are taught well how to stay safe and say that they feel safe in school. Parents agree their children are well cared for and are safe at the school. There is a strong safeguarding culture.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, inspectors looked closely at safeguarding arrangements and pupils' attendance. You correctly identified that the attendance of the disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities needs to improve further. You have strengthened the leadership of this area and ensured that all pupils are rewarded with 'Passport' points for attending school. This is beginning to have a positive effect on vulnerable pupils and some pupils' attendance has improved as a result. Your leader responsible for special educational needs has identified the barriers affecting some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and created bespoke support programmes to improve their attendance. This is helping them attend school more often and is reducing persistent absence. However, you recognise that there is still work to be done to further improve the attendance of these vulnerable groups of pupils.

- You rightly identify that improvements in teaching and learning have been due to effective subject leadership, and the consistent application of the school's helpful teaching, learning and assessment policy. For example, subject leaders work in clusters to identify and share good practice in order to improve pupils' outcomes. This approach has strengthened middle leadership and improved the progress of pupils and disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, in most subjects. In lessons we visited, we saw how pupils who were disadvantaged made similar progress to other pupils.
- Senior leaders previously identified that some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were not making progress in line with that of all pupils nationally in some subjects. We saw that the successful methods used by staff to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils are now being deployed to increase the success of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, there is still more to be done to ensure that this vulnerable group of pupils make good progress in all the subjects they study.
- Leaders responsible for the sixth form have adjusted the curriculum to include more vocational qualifications to match the needs of all the students and the local community. Sixth form leaders have helpfully analysed why students do particularly well in some subjects and not in others, in order to identify and share best practice and bring about improvements. Subject teachers are increasingly precise in the way they help students to improve their work. This is improving pupils' achievement in many subjects. Students appreciate the support they receive from the sixth form team, but more remains to be done to improve the progress A-level students make from their starting points at the end of Year 11.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attendance improves for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- more students following A-level courses make progress similar to those nationally who have the same starting points at the end of Year 11
- more pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make suitable rates of progress in English and humanities.

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

Caroline Walshe
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, your leadership team and chair of governors, middle leaders and members of the support team attached to year groups. We met with pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, both formally and informally, to discuss their views of the school. Inspectors visited a variety of lessons with you and your deputy headteacher, including in the sixth form. We examined a range of documentation including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school development plan, governors' minutes, information about current pupils' progress, including sixth form students, pupils' attendance and behaviour, and about how additional funding is being used. Inspectors considered 233 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 111 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 150 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.