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15 February 2019

Mrs Gemma White  
Interim Executive Headteacher  
Chailey St Peter's Church of England Primary School  
East Grinstead Road  
North Chailey  
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East Sussex  
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Dear Mrs White

### **Short inspection of Chailey St Peter's Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 29 January 2019, 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 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

At the last inspection, the school was asked to raise expectations of pupils' written work and ensure that handwriting is taught consistently across the school. Governors were asked to develop a first-hand knowledge of the school's work.

Since the previous inspection, the school has gone through a period of significant change. A warning notice from East Sussex County Council was issued in March 2018 because of a serious breakdown in leadership and management, including governance. Following the long-term absence and eventual retirement of the headteacher, the current interim head of school was appointed in January 2019. The governing body was discharged and an interim executive board appointed in June 2018. You joined the school as interim executive headteacher for one day a week in the autumn term of 2018. This has been increased to three days a week. The new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) was appointed in January 2019.

With excellent support from leaders and the interim executive board, you have tackled the most urgent priorities. Staffing and leadership are now stable. As a result, there have been rapid improvements in the quality of teaching, the effectiveness of safeguarding, the school's assessment procedures and support for

vulnerable pupils. The school has further benefited from the developing partnership with another local primary school, at which you are the interim executive headteacher. Teachers from both schools share expertise and professional development, resulting in the increasing effectiveness of middle leaders. Initiatives to raise standards in writing, spelling, grammar, punctuation and handwriting are beginning to have an impact. Teachers are now being held to account for pupils' performance. Although the school is well placed to improve further, the full impact of these initiatives is yet to be seen.

The morale of staff is high. They have embraced the challenges of change positively. There is a shared determination to raise standards and expectations, particularly for underachieving most-able pupils and disadvantaged pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Your thorough analysis of pupils' performance information ensures that effective decisions are made about the priorities for professional development. For example, you have lost no time in ensuring that teachers' assessment of pupils is more rigorous and accurate. Staff now have greater awareness of how groups of pupils are achieving, including those who are disadvantaged and pupils with SEND. As a result, the interventions to support pupils at risk of falling behind are timely, effective and beginning to have an impact on progress.

You have maintained the culture of kindness and care for each individual in the school. Pupils say that their teachers and other adults are always supportive, and that they feel happy and well looked after.

The interim executive board have held several meetings to keep parents and carers abreast of change. Since the interim leadership arrangements have been in place, a parents' forum has been established to improve communication and seek their views. While the majority of parents are happy with the school, some parents have found the pace of change unsettling. The reasons behind the changes to improve provision are not as clear to parents as they would like. You are aware of this and are doing everything possible to rebuild parental confidence that the quality of education, which has been verified by inspection findings, is being improved in the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. A more effective system for raising concerns and sharing information has been established so that pupils who may be at risk are identified earlier. An audit of safeguarding procedures was commissioned and carried out. You have already actioned the areas identified for improvement. The school works well with outside agencies to ensure that each pupil is protected.

Thorough checks on the suitability of staff, governors, volunteers and visitors ensure that they have the clearance, background and qualifications to work with pupils. Those responsible for appointing new staff have a clear understanding of all

safeguarding requirements involved in the recruitment process.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that the rare instances of poor behaviour are dealt with quickly and fairly. Parents speak highly of teachers' understanding of their children as individuals, and of the swiftness of teachers' response to any concerns that parents have.

## **Inspection findings**

- The focus of this inspection was to look at: safeguarding; the progress of disadvantaged pupils, the most able pupils and those with SEND, especially in writing; and the effectiveness of the leadership of English and special educational needs.
- Historically, the most able pupils have not achieved as well in any subject compared to pupils with similar starting points nationally. You are determined to raise the expectations for this group and increase their rates of progress, particularly in mathematics and writing. Staff have worked with colleagues in the partner school to gain a more accurate understanding of what working at greater depth looks like in mathematics and writing. While this is feeding into teachers' planning, you recognise that the most able pupils do not always find work challenging enough, and not all teachers have high enough expectations for this group.
- Progress in writing is improving. However, it is slow for low-attaining pupils and those with SEND. The use of high-quality texts to enthuse pupils is engaging those who are reluctant to write. Pupils are beginning to edit their work effectively and know what they have to do to improve. The need to raise standards in spelling, punctuation and grammar has been prioritised by leaders. The daily practice of these skills, together with more regular and precise teaching are having a positive impact. However, there is more to be done to improve pupils' handwriting and the care they take with the presentation of their work.
- Middle leadership is developing. Improvement plans are ambitious and appropriate, and all staff are now held to account more rigorously for pupils' progress. Middle leaders have begun to monitor the quality of teaching through visits to classrooms and the scrutiny of work in books. The full impact of this work is not yet evident in the quality of teaching and learning as the role of the middle leader is at an early stage of development.
- Systems to gather and analyse information on pupils' performance have been sharpened. As a result, pupils who are underachieving are identified earlier and support is put in place quickly. The new SENCo is establishing systems to monitor the effectiveness of this support as a priority. Additional adults are now being deployed effectively, and they provide excellent help for pupils. Vulnerable pupils receive excellent one-to-one or small group support and nurture, such as art therapy. Pupils who need guidance now have appropriate materials to help them to be more independent as they write. As a result, they are writing at greater length and with more accuracy and confidence.
- When we visited classrooms together, you and the interim head of school were

astute and accurate in identifying the strengths and areas for development in teaching and learning. Teaching is improving rapidly as a result of teachers receiving individual professional development, alongside joint training with your partner school.

- Overall attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. However, it is not yet good enough for all groups of pupils. Leaders have developed a raft of measures to address this, including more rigorous tracking of individual pupils' attendance. Earlier engagement with families whose children do not attend regularly is also now in place. As a result, persistent absence, although still higher than the national figure, is improving.
- The interim executive board provides effective challenge and support to the school. They have worked with leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Board members come into school regularly to see for themselves the impact of leaders' actions to improve processes and practices. They bring a wide range of skills and experience in school improvement to their role. They have held meetings regularly with parents to keep them abreast of the changes. The chair of the interim executive board has responded personally to each parent who has raised concerns about the developments in the school. No complaints have been received since October 2018, and the majority of parents are fully supportive of the school's leadership. When I spoke to parents at the beginning of the day, many praised the 'excellent community feel'. In particular, they praised the way teachers listen to their concerns and also the school's culture, in which pupils look after one another well.
- You are working on improving the quality of the curriculum with subject leaders so that pupils' core skills are developed across different subjects. There are some good examples of links between geography, history and English. As an example, pupils write newspaper articles about polar exploration. However, this is not consistent across the school, nor is it developed enough across the range of subjects.
- Pupils enjoy their learning, especially the wide range of trips, such as visits to the Globe Theatre and to a residential outdoor pursuits centre. Pupils are confident and polite and speak highly of their teachers and other adults. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when online, and how to keep themselves healthy. They have a well-developed sense of fair play and respect each other's differences. As one pupil told me, 'We just want to make friends and be kind.'

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching, learning and assessment are reliably good by making sure that:
  - the most able pupils are consistently challenged to attain the higher standards
  - pupils' writing skills are improved and the expectations for the presentation of their work are higher

- middle leaders develop their skills, supporting and challenging teachers to improve outcomes for all pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board and the director of education for the Diocese of Chichester, 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

Lynda Welham  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I held several meetings with you, your head of school and the chair of the interim executive board. I also met with a representative of the local authority, the SENCo, the English lead and school council. I observed the quality of learning, jointly with you and the head of school, in all year groups and in a one-to-one nurture support session. I considered a range of evidence, including: the school's latest assessment information; the school improvement plan; leaders' self-evaluation; pupils' work; minutes of the interim executive board's meetings; middle leaders' action plans; and safeguarding procedures and policies.

I observed behaviour at breaktime. As well as speaking to pupils in lessons, I met with the school council to discuss their learning. I looked at English books from across the school with senior leaders and the English lead. I viewed the 31 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 27 free-text comments. I also took account of 12 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. At the beginning of the day, I had conversations with parents and carers. I also considered the complaints from parents addressed to the interim executive board, and the responses to these from the chair.