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27 June 2019

Mr Simon Hughes  
Headteacher  
Battle and Langton Church of England Primary School  
Market Road  
Battle  
East Sussex  
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Dear Mr Hughes

### **Short inspection of Battle and Langton Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 19 June 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 November 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide strong, highly effective leadership and have created a happy, caring and inclusive school. You are very well supported by your deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. Leaders, staff and governors have a shared vision and purpose, which is to provide the best for all pupils.

Along with your leadership team, you have an accurate view of the strengths and priorities for improvement to ensure the further development of the school. This is evident in the school's self-evaluation and carefully tailored improvement plan.

Senior leaders make considered use of well-respected national research to help teachers plan the best ways for pupils to learn. Leaders are passionate about reducing teachers' workload and about the well-being of all staff, and you readily share your good practice with other schools.

You have maintained and improved upon the areas of strength identified in the previous inspection and have successfully tackled the areas for improvement. Firstly, you were asked to strengthen the impact of subject leaders so that more teaching becomes outstanding and outcomes for pupils are further improved. You have successfully appointed subject leaders who are enhancing their leadership through professional development training and effective mentoring. You are developing effective assessment procedures across the curriculum to complement existing systems for monitoring pupils' progress in English and mathematics.

Secondly, at the last inspection you were asked to improve the teaching of writing to strengthen pupils' progress. Subsequent changes to the way writing is taught have had a positive impact on the progress made by pupils by the end of key stage

2. Progress has strengthened and is now in line with the national average.

Finally, you were asked to develop the curriculum so that pupils have more opportunities to deepen their understanding of diversity and the multi-faith nature of life in modern Britain. The curriculum now fully embraces all aspects of British values, delivering them in interesting and exciting ways. For instance, you have a good relationship with your Member of Parliament, who often visits school to talk to pupils about his role. Pupils have also presented their environmental campaigns to him. Some pupils have visited the Houses of Parliament to discuss women's rights. You make good use of opportunities to invite visitors from other faiths into school and arrange for pupils to visit a variety of places of worship, alongside visits to the local church. As part of your work within the Hastings Sierra Leone Friendship Link, your school is twinned with a school in Hastings, Sierra Leone. This link encourages pupils to understand what life is like for children in other countries, and gives them a real purpose for writing when they exchange pen-pal letters.

Pupils are excellent ambassadors. They have a strong voice and enjoy their time in school. The school council explained their drive to address environmental issues and described the work they had done to reduce the use of single-use plastics in the school's kitchen.

The consistent approach and high expectations of teachers mean that behaviour is managed well. Pupils are diligent and their skills and knowledge are built up carefully. Pupils' behaviour, observed during the inspection, was good, both in and outside the classroom.

Most parents are very positive about the school. Several wrote about how much their children enjoy coming to school, and that their learning is fun. One parent summed this up, writing: 'I cannot thank the school enough for providing an environment where both of my children want to be and where they are thriving.' Many parents commented very positively on the fact that you and other leaders are always visible and accessible. One wrote: 'Whatever the weather, Mr Hughes and Mr Alexander stand out in the playground in the morning, welcoming the children into school by name. A great way to start the day, and to be visible and accessible to all.'

Governance of the school is strong. Governors are clear about their role and carry out their duties diligently. The governing body holds leaders robustly to account for the school's performance. Governors gather a breadth of information through their visits, and by reading leaders' reports and analysing performance information. They offer leaders appropriate support but also challenge by asking probing questions about all aspects of the school's work. As a result, governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for continued improvement.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, staff and governors give high priority to keeping pupils safe and there is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Effective systems are in place to ensure that all the required background checks have been carried out on every adult before they work in school. This includes volunteers and other professionals. The training that staff receive enables them to identify any signs of neglect or

abuse. Safeguarding policy and procedures are understood by all staff. Leaders work very effectively with other agencies and ensure that pupils and their families receive guidance and support when necessary.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take. They are confident that should any bullying occur then teachers would deal with it quickly. Pupils who spoke with me said they feel safe in school and that there is always someone to talk to if they have any worries.

## **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to focus on specific aspects of the school's work. As well as inspecting safeguarding, I explored: pupils' attendance; pupils' progress in writing; pupils' phonics skills and reading progress; and the impact of leaders' work on improving the curriculum.
- Pupils' overall attendance rate declined in the last academic year and the proportion of pupils who were persistently absent increased. As a result of robust actions by leaders, overall attendance has increased this academic year. However, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has also increased. This is partly due to the poor attendance of a number of individuals who are disadvantaged pupils. Despite this, for disadvantaged pupils as a group, the rate of persistent absence has significantly reduced this year. Leaders monitor the attendance of pupils closely. Good attendance is high priority and leaders take effective steps to support pupils and their families. Overall attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average for primary schools. There is still scope for leaders to build on the effective strategies they have put in place to ensure that pupils who are persistently absent attend regularly.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make increasingly strong progress throughout the school because teaching is effective. Teachers use assessment information about pupils' attainment and progress to design tasks carefully. The individual needs of pupils are considered and, where necessary, additional support is provided. Teachers across the school demonstrate good subject knowledge which they use effectively to provide pupils with clear explanations.
- Leaders have taken effective steps to improve progress in writing for all pupils. Teachers ensure that lessons are focused on what the pupils need to learn and find exciting ways to engage pupils in writing. For instance, during the inspection, Year 2 were writing in their travel blog about an ice-cream shop. The recent focus on improving pupils' handwriting, by adopting a consistent, whole-school approach to the teaching of this aspect, has had significant impact on the fluency and presentation of pupils' work. As a result of these actions, progress in writing at the end of key stage 2 is now in line with the national average.
- You are rightly pleased with the progress that pupils make in reading by the end of key stage 2, as progress has been above the national average for the past three years. The Year 6 book club has recently experienced great success at the East Sussex Children's Book Award, with pupils receiving prizes for their book reviews, creative writing and book-jacket designs.

- However, the teaching of phonics is not consistently strong. Historically, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been below the national average. Improving the teaching of phonics is a priority for the school. You have ensured that teachers and teaching assistants follow a similar structure for each phonics session. Teachers plan engaging tasks for pupils but these tasks do not always match pupils' varying needs and abilities. Staff do not consistently address pupils' misconceptions and this results in pupils continuing to use incorrect letters to represent sounds.
- The curriculum has been carefully developed to ensure that pupils make good progress in all subjects. Leaders have developed assessment systems for almost all subjects, with development under way for assessment systems in art and personal, social, health and economic education. Pupils are proud of the work they complete in all subjects. Leaders ensure that there are many and various opportunities for parents and the community to see this work, including much celebration on the school's website and social media.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching and learning in phonics are consistently good
- the attendance of pupils continues to improve and that persistent absence decreases.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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

Marcia Goodwin  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the inclusion manager and subject leaders for English and mathematics. I held a meeting with seven members of the governing body. I also met with a group of pupils, as well as discussing learning with pupils in lessons. I talked to a representative of the local authority by telephone. With the deputy headteacher, I looked at pupils' learning during lesson observations. I also looked at pupils' work in books with subject leaders. I examined the school's improvement priorities and discussed pupils' progress. I looked at documents, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan and attendance records. I examined safeguarding documents,

including the single central record. I considered 104 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, including 53 free-text comments. I also considered 79 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 41 responses to the staff questionnaire.