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James Procter
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Dear Mr Procter

Short inspection of East Hoathly C of E Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 2018, 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As executive headteacher, you provide strong, dynamic leadership. Together with the deputy headteacher and governors, you lead a strong drive for continual improvement to enable the school to be as good as it can be. Senior leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school. They evaluate a wide range of information and evidence effectively to reach their view.

Morale among staff is high. All staff who responded to the questionnaire agree that they enjoy working in the school and the overwhelming majority are proud to be part of the school's team. Middle leaders are provided with the training and expertise to judge how well their subjects are being taught. They understand how to evaluate learning using a range of different sources, and how to give useful feedback to colleagues after lesson observations or other monitoring activities. This has tackled one of the areas for improvement that inspectors asked leaders to address at the previous inspection.

Pupils love coming to school. They say that teachers make learning enjoyable and fun. Pupils are confident and resilient, always willing to take on a challenge. They understand the value of cooperation and persistence in their learning. One boy explained that it is important to work harder when facing challenges, as 'you know others are also struggling and you can both put your minds to it to find a way around the problem'. Pupils consequently have excellent attitudes to learning.

Pupils behave well in lessons and at other times, including playtimes. They are kind and considerate to each other, and older pupils take great care of the younger ones. Pupils of all ages enjoy the opportunities they have to take responsibility in such roles as peer mediators and learning ambassadors, and as members of the RE and sports councils. East Hoathly is a warmly inclusive school. Pupils understand and embrace the need to be welcoming to all, regardless of their appearance, background or individual circumstances.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Many who I met on the playground explained how much they appreciate the way that staff know all the pupils, which creates a cohesive, happy school. One parent said, 'The staff play a huge part in making sure our children feel safe, respected and... able to enjoy themselves and enjoy learning.' Parents of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are especially positive about the school. They say that the school goes 'above and beyond' what parents expect to help these pupils make good progress and be fully involved in school life.

Teachers plan sequences of lessons that build pupils' knowledge and skills. They allow pupils some freedom in choosing the levels of difficulty of their work, so that pupils can develop independence and ambition. Pupils have targets to help them understand how to improve and to focus on the most important aspects of their learning. Work in pupils' books is mostly of a good standard. However, teachers do not routinely insist that pupils always present their work as neatly as they can, nor do they check thoroughly that key words, such as days of the week, are spelled correctly.

Pupils achieve well in the school. They consistently attain well above the national average in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Almost all have reached this standard by the end of Year 2. At the end of key stage 1 in 2017, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standards in reading was in line with national figures, but above that in writing and mathematics. At the end of key stage 2 in 2017, pupils made good progress and the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was well above the national average. The number of pupils who achieved the higher standards in these subjects was in line with pupils nationally. However, senior leaders recognise that more work is still needed to ensure that more boys achieve the higher standard in writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safety and well-being of pupils is at the heart of the school's work. Staff are well trained and clear about how to recognise any signs that might indicate a pupil is at risk. They know the importance of keeping accurate written records. The recently introduced online system for recording concerns is understood and used by all staff. Leaders keep staff up to date with any issues that affect specific children in the school. Governors play an important role in undertaking checks, including talking to pupils and making sure that only suitable people can work in the school.

Pupils feel safe in the school. They understand about bullying, including cyber bullying, and can explain clearly the difference between deliberate bullying, and occasional arguments and fallings-out. One girl in key stage 1 explained to me that

bullying can be defined by the acronym STOP: 'several times on purpose'. Pupils, staff and parents agree that there is very little bullying in school, but where it does happen, staff intervene quickly and effectively.

Inspection findings

- We agreed four aspects of the school's work to focus on during this inspection. The first was to do with the number of boys who achieved the greater depth standard in writing. The proportion of boys who have reached this standard at the end of key stages 1 and 2 in recent years has been well below the national average. Now teachers provide many interesting writing opportunities across the curriculum. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress and achieve well. Imaginative, attractive displays around the school showcase pupils' writing in a range of curriculum subjects.
- However, in most year groups, boys do not achieve the same high standards of writing as girls. This year, a greater proportion of boys are on track to achieve the greater depth standard at the end of key stage 2, but this is not reflected in all other year groups.
- The second area I considered was how well the curriculum enables pupils to achieve in a wide range of subjects. The curriculum offers pupils a rich and varied diet. Pupils say that lessons in a range of subjects are enjoyable, because teachers listen carefully to what pupils say, often using their ideas when planning learning. Middle leaders check that each subject is taught well and receives enough time in the curriculum.
- New approaches to the teaching of science have presented pupils with regular opportunities to design their own experiments to test out ideas for themselves. Leaders have provided pupils with bags of resources and ideas for experiments that can be tried at home. The curriculum is enriched further by trips to interesting places such as Fishbourne Roman palace, Newhaven Fort and a museum in London. Pupils also have many opportunities to learn about people and places around the world, including a visit from some Syrian refugees. Further, pupils are in contact with schools from different countries, giving them a wider perspective on the lives of different groups of people. These experiences help them to gain a growing understanding of the wider world and support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Next, I looked at how well teaching in the early years helps children to make good progress and exceed the early learning goals by the time they join Year 1. Children get off to a very strong start in the early years. Teachers and staff in the Nursery and Reception know each child individually, planning carefully for them to develop the early skills of reading, writing and mathematics. The leader of the early years has considerable expertise in this area and offers clear direction and focus. The proportion of children on track to achieve the higher standards in mathematics is greater than in 2017. Proportions of children on track to exceed the early learning goals in reading, writing and mathematics are well above those seen nationally.
- Finally, I considered the effectiveness of leaders' and governors' actions to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence, especially for disadvantaged

pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Leaders have worked hard to improve the attendance of pupils in the school, stressing to parents the value of regular attendance. You provided convincing evidence that these figures are being disproportionately affected by a very small number of pupils with well-understood additional needs. The attendance of these pupils has improved steadily this year because of the persistent efforts of senior leaders and staff at the school. Consequently, attendance is improving overall and for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of boys achieve the higher standard in writing at the end of key stages 1 and 2
- teachers have consistently high expectations of the quality and presentation of pupils' written work across the curriculum.

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

Bruce Waelend
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I had meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, other leaders, four members of the governing body and a representative of the local diocese. I spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. Together with the deputy headteacher, we visited all classes in the school to observe teaching and learning. We looked at a range of pupils' work as well. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, including at playtime, and had a meeting with a group of 12 pupils. I considered 15 responses to the staff survey, 12 responses to the pupil survey and 22 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. At the start of the day, I spoke to several parents. I evaluated a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation documents and development plans. I looked closely at the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and checks, and spoke with several members of staff to test out their understanding of these arrangements.