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14 May 2019

Ms Carmel Hughes  
Headteacher  
St John the Baptist Catholic Primary School  
Whitehawk Hill Road  
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East Sussex  
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Dear Ms Hughes

### **Short inspection of St John the Baptist Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 30 April 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 October 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 have a clear vision for the school. You aim for your pupils to have the best opportunities in education, so they are well prepared for the future. Your school is friendly, diverse and inclusive. Staff work hard, are committed and want success for pupils and improvements for the community. Governors fully support you in your vision and have the appropriate skills to help steer the school.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and say that it is fun. Older pupils are proud to be school councillors and are pleased that they have managed to make a difference to life in school, especially the changes they have secured to the lunch menu. They are passionate about being members of the eco council and enjoy being playground buddies, supporting younger pupils. They contribute to the life of the wider community through a range of fundraising activities. Pupils value the wide range of clubs on offer and particularly appreciate the recently installed running track, which provides more opportunity for daily exercise.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Most would recommend it to others. A few parents said that they thought there were some issues around bullying. Pupils say there is very little bullying, and that when there is an incident it is swiftly addressed by adults. Records of such incidents show that bullying is taken very seriously by staff and carefully followed up. Pupils' behaviour at breaktime during the inspection was generally good. Pupils know and understand how they are expected to behave; however, a small group of pupils were play fighting, knowing that it is not allowed. Behaviour for learning is good. Pupils pay attention to their teacher and

concentrate well in class. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and always try their best. They say that work is neither too easy nor too hard and that they like learning. However, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to use their independent writing skills and record their learning across the curriculum.

The school places importance on developing pupils' literacy skills. Staff provide a wide range of support to help pupils improve their reading and writing. However, not all pupils engage with the support sufficiently to help them improve.

At the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that vulnerable pupils' attendance improved, the achievement in phonics of Year 1 pupils matched or exceeded the national average and that school improvement plans show how governors will check actions to improve outcomes. You have put effective strategies in place to support attendance. You have made phonics a priority. Governors check all aspects of your work using a range of activities. These include asking leaders searching questions, analysing data, making regular visits to talk to pupils and looking at their books.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that good systems are in place for safeguarding and that actions are diligently recorded. Staff are vigilant around pupils' welfare and follow up the smallest incidents. Staff's training for all aspects of safeguarding is up to date and leaders ensure that all staff have frequent refreshers. Leaders have good relationships with outside agencies such as social workers and are proactive in following up all cases, so pupils and families receive the support needed. Online safety is a strength. Pupils have regular teaching about how to keep themselves safe online. They remember what they have been taught and know what to do if they experience anything that concerns them. Pupils, parents and staff say that the school is a safe place. Pupils appreciate the secure site and the way staff look after them.

Overall attendance has improved and is in line with the national average. Pupils come into class as soon as they arrive in the mornings, and this has reduced lateness. Alongside other strategies, such as the use of rewards, meeting and greeting, settling-in time in the inclusion room and bagels for breakfast, you are doing everything you can to encourage good attendance. You monitor attendance closely and have recently employed a consultant to help you further improve practice, particularly for vulnerable pupils and those who are persistently absent.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, I looked at: safeguarding; how leaders make sure that pupils have the best start in learning to read; the support for disadvantaged pupils; and whether the wider curriculum is broad and balanced.
- The English leaders are knowledgeable and hardworking. Following their own training, they have successfully led comprehensive training in phonics for all staff. This has ensured that teachers' planning for phonics is systematic and thorough. Leaders have brought about an improvement in the pace of teaching as well as

reviewing and improving the range of reading resources. This has resulted in more pupils achieving the expected standard by the end of the Reception Year.

- In some classes, more than half of the pupils speak English as an additional language. This has an impact on the development of their early reading skills. Attainment of the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been below the national average for the past three years. Leaders carefully check pupils' progress and provide additional support for those pupils who need it. Structured teaching and strong support from parents, through regular reading homework, have resulted in good progress in reading in key stage 2. By the end of key stage 2 pupils read very well, and their attainment and progress are significantly above the national averages.
- English leaders have been working with staff to develop pupils' writing so that more pupils write at greater depth and the higher standard. They have created a consistent approach to lesson planning and introduced a new method for assessing pupils' progress in writing. The evidence in pupils' books shows that they are making steady progress in writing throughout the school. Many pupils in upper key stage 2 write using vocabulary, spelling, grammar and punctuation at a standard well above the national average.
- Additional funding is effectively used to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils have the same learning opportunities as other pupils. Everyone in school is committed to pupils having equal opportunities. You rigorously monitor and review the provision for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The plans to address individuals' needs are detailed. They employ a wide range of interventions and learning support to match pupils' needs. Many vulnerable pupils are making better progress this year than they have in the past.
- The support for emotional well-being provided by the two inclusion mentors has ensured that vulnerable pupils are ready to learn. This is having a positive impact on their academic progress. The introduction of forest schools has also been particularly effective in engaging pupils who enjoy practical and physical learning.
- The rich, broad and balanced curriculum is a strength. Pupils greatly enjoy their topics, particularly the visits and 'stunning starts' that teachers plan. During the inspection, key stage 1 pupils came into school excited because they were going on a visit to Arundel Castle. Teachers linked this visit to the teaching of creative writing. Pupils took with them their letters of application to be either a knight or a princess.
- The links between the topics and pupils' learning in English and mathematics are clearly planned and all subjects are integrated well. In some classes, pupils are asked what they already know about the topic before it begins. Teachers use this information as a springboard to ensure that pupils are appropriately challenged in their learning. In many classes, pupils' pride in their work is evident in their topic books, which are attractive and well presented.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- further develop independent writing by increasing the opportunities for pupils to record their learning across the curriculum
- provide pupils with the support they need to strengthen their literacy skills further.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, 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

Lesley Corbett  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I had meetings with you and your deputy headteacher and with four members of the governing body. I also met with a group of pupils, the school's business manager and with a representative of the local authority. I visited classes with you to scrutinise books and to observe teaching and learning. I considered 32 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 17 free-text comments. I read a letter from a pupil and analysed a range of the school's documents, including: leaders' improvement planning; minutes of the governing body's meetings; and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.