

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mrs Tina Angell  
Headteacher  
Whiston Junior and Infant School  
Saville Road  
Whiston  
Rotherham  
South Yorkshire  
S60 4DX

Dear Mrs Angell

### **Short inspection of Whiston Junior and Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 May 2016, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2013.

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

You, ably supported by the multi-academy trust, have maintained and built securely on the good quality of education provided by the school since the last inspection. You have high expectations of what pupils can achieve: staff and governors admire and respect the tireless way you work to ensure that all pupils learn as well as they can. They have great confidence in your leadership and share your strong sense of moral purpose. Morale is high and staff work well as a team.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified the need to ensure that all teaching is at least good, to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and to make learning more interesting. You have tackled these recommendations successfully, in part by targeting professional development for teachers accurately. You use a range of methods to ensure that teachers have the opportunities they need to improve their practice, drawing on expertise in the multi-academy trust and beyond, as well as within the school. New professionals are very well supported.

A catalyst for the improvements to teaching and learning is the implementation of a new, exciting curriculum. Topics with a lead subject provide the focus for learning across the curriculum. Pupils are full of enthusiasm for the activities that have helped them learn about the ancient Egyptians, volcanoes, planets, Chinese new year and much more. They value the visits, for instance to historic houses, that have expanded their horizons and helped them understand topics more fully.

Learning in this way is enhanced by themed weeks when the whole school shares a focus. A recent example of this saw each class studying a different Roald Dahl book and learning about the author, while the school hall was transformed into the chocolate factory. The vibrant displays throughout the school promote learning, particularly through celebrating the best that each pupil can do. This approach reflects the school's determination to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. The wide range of topics and themes helps pupils understand British values as well as preparing them effectively for life in modern Britain.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors make sure that safeguarding arrangements are secure. The policies concerned with safeguarding pupils are detailed and thorough. Regular training, alongside effective systems and procedures, ensure that staff are keenly aware of risks to pupils' well-being and take prompt action to protect them when necessary. Leaders draw appropriately on the expertise of a range of agencies to support children and families. Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that staff would deal swiftly and effectively with any incidents. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how to stay safe in a range of situations, for instance when near fireworks or online.

### **Inspection findings**

- You provide highly effective leadership to the school. Regular assessments of pupils' attainment and progress, combined with observations of teaching and checks on pupils' work, ensure that you have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Consequently, the plan for improvement is firmly rooted in secure evidence. However, success criteria are not always sharply enough focused so even though progress on planned actions is monitored regularly, checking that improvements are on track is not straightforward.
- You have taken steps to improve the quality of provision in the early years and key stage 1 in order to raise standards and increase the consistency of pupils' achievement. Dips in the recent past were the result of staffing issues that have been resolved. Consequently, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year rose in 2015 and was in line with the national average. Leaders expect a further significant rise this year as a consequence of better provision. A sharp decline in 2014 in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening (letters and the sounds they make) was reversed last year and leaders are confident that this improvement will be sustained. Following a dip in performance last year, improvements are also predicted in the outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 2.
- Performance is more consistent at key stage 2 where pupils make good progress to reach standards that are above average. Disadvantaged pupils do particularly well, with most making more than expected progress. However, although some strategies have been put in place and new resources purchased, the school's own assessment information for this year indicates

that gaps between the performance of boys and girls remain, with girls outperforming boys.

- An enthusiastic buzz of learning permeates classrooms. Teachers are highly skilled at capturing pupils' interest through challenging puzzles and games, and keeping them hooked on learning through a range of activities pitched at the right level. Teachers question pupils well and are accomplished at adapting their questions to tease out what pupils understand and then deal with any misconceptions immediately. Pupils have many opportunities to share their ideas with their 'talk partners' and this helps them to consolidate their understanding. Pupils respond thoughtfully to teachers' marking and feedback. Teaching assistants make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning. They have benefited from the school's well-targeted approach to training.
- Pupils are eager learners, as demonstrated by their above-average attendance and very good behaviour. The new curriculum and high-quality teaching foster their love of learning very effectively. Pupils relish learning through topics and the diverse activities teachers devise to make these exciting. They appreciate the choices they can make about home learning tasks and during the inspection some proudly showed off the projects they have tackled at home. Pupils enjoy the wide-ranging opportunities they have to participate in after-school clubs, trips and residential visits.
- The school fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful of one another and adults. They are keen to take on responsibilities, for instance as school councillors, playground buddies and eco-warriors. The school council has drawn up the '5 Ws', rules for good behaviour throughout the school. Councillors have successfully organised a number of charitable fundraising activities, giving careful consideration to the choice of charity. Pupils are confident that their views are listened to, for instance on the choice of games and equipment to play with at break and lunchtime.
- The governing body provides strong challenge to school leaders. Governors are highly committed to their role and access training as required to help them fulfil this effectively. They are confident that they are kept well informed by the regular reports you provide. Information about governance arrangements is not available on the school's website, which otherwise meets statutory requirements and is very informative. Several parents commented on how useful they find the website. More generally, others noted that communication with parents is a strength of the school. The school offers lots of workshops to help parents understand what their children are learning and how best to help with this.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the main success criteria in the school's plan to develop excellence are measurable
- pupils make consistently good progress to reach the standards they are capable of in the Reception Year and key stage 1
- strategies introduced to raise the attainment of boys so that it is similar to that

of girls are effective

- the required information about the governing body is published on the school's website.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the strategic director of children's services for Rotherham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I discussed aspects of the school's work with you, your assistant headteacher and several members of staff. I met with the chief executive officer of the White Woods Primary Academy Trust, of which the school is a member. The chair of the governing body and a number of governors met with me. I talked to a small number of parents and took account of the 23 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered responses to the school's most recent surveys of the views of pupils and parents. Pupils did not complete a questionnaire during this inspection. Sixteen responses to the staff questionnaire were analysed. I visited each class, in some instances with you, heard some pupils read and looked at some work in pupils' books. I talked informally to pupils about school life as well as meeting with the school council and some eco-warriors. I scrutinised a range of documents including those relating to keeping pupils safe, school policies, the school's self-evaluation, the developing excellence plan and information about pupils' achievement.