

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Andy Howard
Headteacher
Velmead Junior School
Velmead Road
Fleet
Hampshire
GU52 7LG

Dear Mr Howard

Short inspection of Velmead Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, ably supported by your leadership team, guide the school with pride, passion and determination. Parents, carers and staff are unanimous in their praise of your leadership, and pupils across the school feel proud to call you their headteacher. One parent summarised the feelings of many, noting: 'My children are so happy here; happy children love learning.'

Leaders at all levels are driven to achieve the best outcomes for pupils. This is exemplified in the performance of your pupils, a high proportion of whom leave the school with levels of attainment above their peers nationally. Despite this high performance, there is no complacency among staff. Improvement plans for all subject areas show leaders' ambition for continual improvement. As one member of staff noted: 'We never stop striving; we take the best ideas, "Velmeadise" them, and always look at the next area for improvement.'

Governors are knowledgeable, skilled and determined. They hold leaders to account for their actions and check the work they do in school by gathering first-hand evidence and scrutinising external reports. Governors, wisely, rotate their areas of responsibility to ensure that their skills are constantly developed. Governors recognise that the school website requires amendments in order to meet government publishing requirements.

The behaviour of pupils in the school is of a consistently high standard. In class, pupils listen attentively to instructions and complete their tasks with purpose and

industry. Teachers and support staff offer well-judged guidance and draw upon their extensive subject knowledge to ensure that pupils understand the work and are appropriately challenged. The curriculum is lively and interesting. Recent refinements to your mathematics curriculum ensure that all pupils are adept at solving complex problems and explaining their reasoning. In English, teachers plan opportunities for pupils to read and write well across the curriculum. The high standards of writing seen in topic and science books match those in pupils' English work books. Leaders have put in place effective systems to support pupils who fall behind and are now focused on improving systems to challenge the most able disadvantaged pupils to make even better progress.

In the playground, pupils play with joy and enthusiasm. They relish the use of the first-class space and speak enthusiastically about the range of clubs and activities the school provides. Pupils possess a strong moral compass, exemplified by their charitable work. Recently, pupils completed a fun run in aid of 'jeans for genes', working as a team and learning about the lives of children who have genetic disorders. Pupils state that they rarely fall out with each other but, when they do, teachers are always on hand to support them.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to sharpen teacher performance targets. Leaders review teachers' performance regularly. They set challenging targets for teachers in line with the school development plan and support them effectively in achieving these. Governors keep a close eye on the performance of staff and reward teachers appropriately, particularly when their performance exceeds expectations. Leaders balance their ambition for staff development with clear plans to reduce teacher workload by reducing unnecessary tasks. As a result, teachers and support staff are skilled and motivated, and morale across the school is high.

Safeguarding is effective.

Child protection documents are detailed and well maintained. Leaders ensure that checks on staff are completed before they start employment. All staff receive and apply their comprehensive training to monitor pupils' welfare carefully and report any concerns. When concerns arise, leaders take robust action, collaborating appropriately with parents and external agencies, to ensure that pupils are kept safe from harm.

Governors are diligent in checking the work of leaders. They visit the school often to ensure that their detailed evaluations of safeguarding and health and safety are up to date and accurate. When any aspect of the school's work can be improved, governors take swift and appropriate action, working with leaders to ensure that systems for keeping children safe are constantly improved.

Pupils receive extensive guidance to help them stay safe and, when appropriate, disseminate this among their peers. For example, pupils in Year 6 created an online safety video to tell new pupils about how to stay safe when using the internet and guide them to be responsible digital citizens. Parents are well informed through

regular safeguarding updates in newsletters and the school website.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; how effectively leaders identify and support lower-attaining pupils; the quality of support for disadvantaged pupils; the effectiveness of appraisal and performance management systems; and how well leaders have understood and adapted to recent national changes in curriculum and assessment.
- Comprehensive systems for assessment and tracking progress ensure that pupils who fall behind are identified quickly. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely with these pupils, using their extensive skills to offer them just the right amount of support to help them catch up. As a result, previously low-attaining pupils make strong progress in all subjects.
- The least able disadvantaged pupils receive useful support in class. Parents and leaders work closely to offer the right support for pupils, with a particularly strong emphasis on access to clubs, trips and visits. These pupils make good progress in all subjects.
- Leaders analyse a range of evidence to form accurate evaluations of staff performance. They pair teachers with appropriate strengths to support each other so that staff build their understanding of effective teaching methods. Staff appreciate the opportunity to share their ideas. For example, during staff meetings, teachers discuss their 'tweak of the week' with each other, sharing best practice to try out in their own classes. Leaders and governors monitor staff performance and hold teachers to account for pupils' progress. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved across the school.
- Leaders are well attuned to recent educational developments. They work closely with local authority advisers to stay abreast of changes to the curriculum and assessment methods and, wisely, ensure that all changes made fit the needs of pupils. For example, leaders have developed an assessment system that is understood by all staff and offers quick and accurate access to pupils' performance information. Leaders are informed, evaluative and well placed to drive further improvement in the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- systems for identifying and supporting the most able disadvantaged pupils are strengthened
- the school website complies with government publishing requirements.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Lambert
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, senior and middle leaders, and five governors. I observed learning in five classes, all jointly with senior leaders. Together we looked at pupils' work. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I considered the 118 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and a letter submitted by parents, and spoke to parents at the beginning of the day. I met with four pupils from Years 3 to 6, and gathered the views of other pupils throughout the day.