

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



24 May 2019

Mrs Fran Rusbridge
Executive Headteacher
Willesborough Infant School
Church Road
Willesborough
Ashford
Kent
TN24 0JZ

Dear Mrs Rusbridge

Short inspection of Willesborough Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 2 May 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 April 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Under your inspirational leadership, the school has gone from strength to strength. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and especially appreciative of what they describe as your 'outstanding' work in the school. You have developed an exceptionally driven and high-performing team of leaders who have met the challenges you have set them. Staff are united in their desire to ensure that pupils receive the best possible start to their education. As a result, pupils are making strong progress across both phases and are well prepared for the next step in their education.

You have bravely taken on the leadership of the junior school because you want to ensure that your pupils get the best possible experience throughout their primary education. You have developed a more effective governing body over both schools that exercises more rigorous oversight than in the past. Leaders enjoy the challenge of working across both schools and further developing their expertise. You and your leaders have successfully managed significant change without compromising on the quality of education in the school.

The school is a colourful and exciting place to learn. Pupils relish learning and are very positive about school. They are proud of what they can do and enjoy working together as well as independently. They are especially positive about sharing their work with teachers and parents. Pupils are confident in expressing their opinions, resilient when faced with challenge and enthusiastic about learning new ideas. Pupils talk excitedly about the curriculum because, more often than not, they are able to pursue their own interests and talents.

Parents are delighted with the school. They describe the school in glowing terms such as 'going from strength to strength' and 'an exceptional learning environment'. A number of parents of vulnerable children were fulsome in their praise for teachers who 'went the extra mile' to ensure that these pupils enjoy and achieve at school. You and your leaders communicate very effectively with parents, who appreciate how open and welcoming the school is for them and their families. Your innovative approaches to engaging parents in their children's learning such as the 'Big Breakfast' and the 'Kittens Programme' are paying off. Parents commented how much they feel included and part of their child's learning.

You have maintained and improved on the strengths identified in the last inspection. Pupils leave Reception Year with a very good foundation for more formal schooling. More pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, leave early years with a good level of development than the national average. Significant numbers of children exceed the expected level of development as a result of the very effective practice. You have further refined transition so that pupils who have strong starts continue to thrive. You have introduced a new spelling programme that is supporting pupils in their writing. The assessment systems are highly effective and support pupils, especially those attaining below expectations, to achieve well. As a result, pupils continue to outperform the national averages in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 at both the expected standard and greater depth.

You have successfully addressed the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. You and your team have developed very effective approaches to improve writing, which have had a substantial impact on standards. Pupils, including the disadvantaged, are achieving well and a significant number are exceeding the expected standards in writing at the end of Reception and key stage 1. Impressively, this has been the case for the last two years because you have sought out best practice and applied innovation rigorously across the school. You have also developed your leaders' expertise in English so that they now provide support as specialist leaders of education to other schools.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding practices are very strong. Following the recent federation with the junior school, you reviewed your procedures. As a result, the systems in place to keep children safe are thorough and robust. Staff are appropriately trained, including those with additional responsibilities. The school's safeguarding policy is appropriate and up to date. There is regular training for staff, governors and

volunteers as well as useful and frequent updates. Consequently, staff are knowledgeable about what to do if they have concerns about a pupil.

Parents are especially positive about this aspect of the school's work. Pupils are confident in sharing any concerns they have and feel very well cared for. Leaders' work with vulnerable pupils is especially effective. They are dogged and resolute in pursuing the best outcomes for the pupils in their care. They are tenacious in following up with other agencies so that pupils and families receive the best possible support available.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements to protect pupils who attend less well; the quality of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); how well leaders and governors ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well; and how effectively the curriculum supports pupils' progress.
- Previously, a small number of pupils attended school less frequently than expected. Consequently, leaders took urgent action to improve the support these pupils and families receive. As a result, those pupils with lower attendance are coming to school more frequently than in the past. However, leaders acknowledge that the attendance of a minority of pupils, including vulnerable pupils, remains too low.
- Leaders are passionate and committed to ensuring that all pupils succeed. As a result, pupils with SEND are well catered for. Teachers and additional adults use advice and guidance from specialists to provide sharp and well-judged interventions. Teachers are especially skilful in making use of scaffolds and prompts to support pupils' writing and spelling. Consequently, those pupils with SEND thrive in the school and make strong progress from their starting points.
- You have identified that some pupils in receipt of the pupil premium arrive at the school below the expected standard for their age. In the early years setting, teachers and additional adults plan creatively to develop activities that rapidly improve vulnerable pupils' language and early reading skills. In key stage 1, teachers work very effectively with parents so that pupils in receipt of the pupil premium are attaining well at the end of each phase, including in the phonics screening check. As a result, the gaps between the achievement of these pupils and others are diminishing rapidly by the end of key stage 1.
- Leaders have developed a very impressive curriculum that excites and engages pupils. You and your team reflect carefully on how you can weave the pupils' interests and passions into the curriculum. For example, work in Year 2 on climate change reflected the interests of the 'green gang', a group of pupils especially concerned about global warming. Pupils' strong progress across both phases reflects the high-quality environment, the range of enrichment and the skilful planning of topics such as 'Flight'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop further their approaches to improve the attendance of those pupils, especially vulnerable pupils, who are currently attending less well.

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

Yours sincerely

Seamus Murphy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your leadership team, members of the governing body, and staff. I spoke with your school improvement partner. We reviewed documentation, including safeguarding checks, policies, minutes of meetings, case studies, procedures, and school planning documentation. I visited all the year groups in the school with you and spoke to pupils about their work. We reviewed a sample of pupils' books, both in and outside of lessons. I met with ten pupils at breaktime to get their views of the school. I took account of parents' views by speaking to them after school, and considered the 71 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including the free-text responses.