

Inspection of Westmeads Community Infant School

Cromwell Road, Whitstable, Kent CT5 1NA

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Westmeads Infant School are happy and carefree. They enjoy taking part in a wide range of activities at break and lunchtimes. Leaders ensure that the school's core values, particularly love and kindness, are understood by all. Leaders think carefully about enrichment activities that meet the needs of their pupils, for example, swimming lessons to ensure pupils know how to keep themselves safe in the water.

Most pupils, including those in the early years, are keen to engage in lessons. However, when learning is less well organised, some pupils need reminding to stay on task. Expectations, in some subjects, are not high enough to challenge pupils in their learning. Leaders are in the process of reviewing the curriculum. It does not currently ensure that pupils know or remember as much as they should in all subjects. Curriculum plans in the early years are stronger.

Pupils and parents say that the school is a safe place. Bullying is extremely rare. If pupils fall out with their friends, adults help them to put things right. Pupils share positive and trusting relationships with all staff at the school. For example, the school cook knows the dietary needs and preferences of all the pupils.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve the school. Governors are proactive in supporting them to make the changes that are needed. Leaders know that the curriculum in some subjects is not sufficiently well organised. Some subject leaders have not ensured that plans identify the key knowledge that pupils must know and remember. For example, in geography, plans do not fully show how pupils will build on their map work skills. The curriculum is broad and offers a wide range of subjects. However, leaders do not always ensure that sufficient time is allowed for each subject within the topic-based approach.

Assessment is not currently as precise as it should be. Leaders have begun to review assessment practice. This is because plans do not make clear what leaders want pupils to learn in some subjects. Lesson activities and learning outcomes do not always match the intended aims of the planned curriculum.

A well sequenced mathematics curriculum ensures that pupils have opportunities to improve their knowledge and understanding of number, for example. However, pupils are not always required to work accurately when setting out their work.

Pupils enjoy reading and benefit from a well sequenced phonics programme. They take home books that are matched to the letters and sounds they have learned. Children in Reception receive phonics teaching quickly when they start at the school. Some pupils, who find it more difficult to read, can become distracted when the teaching of phonics is not precise.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has improved. The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator has introduced plans to ensure that support for pupils with SEND is now consistently strong.

Children in Reception develop a detailed knowledge of the seven areas of development. Staff bring learning to life through carefully planned trips to support the curriculum. For example, children in the early years went on a bus ride to give context and meaning to the 'Naughty bus' topic. The curriculum is well developed in the early years, and leaders are working to fully prepare children for the key stage 1 curriculum. Children in Reception receive high-quality care so that they are confident and happy. Leaders have systems in place to ensure that those who have speech and language difficulties, or lower starting points, are quickly identified and get the support they need in the early years.

Leaders organise an exciting range of enriching experiences for pupils. For example, a night of stargazing with a telescope. Pupils are excited about the carnival that the school community is preparing for. Pupils learn how to be good citizens by litter picking at the beach and writing Christmas cards to local elderly residents. Leaders are developing the personal, social and health education curriculum to ensure that pupils encounter the rich diversity of modern Britain and the world. All pupils have access to a range of clubs. They enjoy taking responsibility for running some clubs themselves, for example, the dance club.

All staff say that they feel supported and valued by leaders. Leaders are mindful of workload and help staff to manage it when it is high. Leaders carefully plan meaningful opportunities for staff training. This has recently focused on mathematics and reading. However, there are plans in place to develop staff subject knowledge in the foundation subjects and science.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that all staff know their responsibilities for safeguarding. High-quality training means that adults take appropriate actions to keep pupils safe. Leaders work alongside external professionals so that appropriate additional support is provided for pupils.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the taught curriculum. Pupils know who to report their concerns to in school. They trust that staff will listen and support them if they are worried.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not yet sequenced in a logical way in all subjects. As a result, pupils, in a number of subjects, do not always know, remember, and do more. Leaders need to complete their work in reviewing and refining the curriculum so that it is coherently planned and sequenced towards sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning.
- Support for the weakest readers is not always as precise as it could be. This means that some children, who find it harder to learn to read, do not make as much progress through the intended phonics curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils receive expert teaching in phonics.
- Assessment is not used consistently well in all subjects. This is exacerbated by a lack of clarity around what leaders and teachers intend pupils to learn in each subject. This means that assessment is not always accurate in identifying gaps in pupils' knowledge in these subjects. Leaders need to continue their work to develop assessment systems and practice, so that teachers produce clear next steps for pupils. This should not create unnecessary burdens for staff and pupils.
- Subject leaders do not always have secure subject knowledge in the subject that they lead. This means that curriculum plans are not always effectively sequenced. Senior leaders need to ensure that middle leaders receive high-quality training so that they have the capacity to support leaders' work on curriculum development.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use Ofsted Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further guidance on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can complain to Ofsted.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	118363
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10211822
Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Matt Dechaine
Headteacher	Kirsty White
Website	www.westmeads.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 October 2007

Information about this school

- The school has an on-site breakfast and after-school club.
- The school has experienced a falling roll in recent years.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision for their pupils.
- The current headteacher started at the school in September 2021.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the senior leadership team, including the headteacher, assistant headteachers, and leader of the early years.
- Inspectors also spoke with governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.

- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors viewed a range of safeguarding documentation. They spoke with staff to check how well they understood their safeguarding responsibilities. Inspectors checked leaders’ procedures for safer recruitment.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour at playtimes and in lessons. They spoke with pupils to gather their views about behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of staff to explore their views about workload and well-being.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, science, and geography. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, and spoke with pupils and teachers. Inspectors looked at examples of their work. Inspectors also scrutinised curriculum planning across a range of other subject areas. Inspectors listened to pupils read to trusted adults.

Inspection team

Zoë Harris, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Alice Roberts

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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