

Velmead Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116054
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312162
Inspection date	31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	365
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Landeryou
Headteacher	Mr Andy Howard
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2004
School address	Velmead Road Fleet GU52 7LG
Telephone number	01252 628704
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- Why are standards relatively higher for boys than girls?
- What are the features and impact of the school's work to raise achievement in mathematics?
- What are the features of the curriculum that make it good?

Evidence was gathered from the analysis of school documentation, observation of lessons, conversations with learners and discussions with teachers, governors and senior staff. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This larger than average junior school serves an area that is predominately made up of owner-occupier houses. The social circumstances of most pupils are above those typically found. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage. The school has gained the following awards: Investors in People, National Healthy Schools, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Sport ActiveMark Gold, ArtsMark Silver, FA Charter Standard School.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Velmead provides a good standard of education, and is on an upward trend, because it is well led and its provision is good. Pupils' attainment when they enter Year 3 is above average. They achieve well, make good progress in each year group and are well prepared for secondary education. By the time that they leave at the end of Year 6, national test results show that standards are significantly above average and, on occasion, exceptionally high. Current performance of Year 6 pupils show that they are on course to continue the upward trend towards gaining high levels. The school has focused on strengthening progress in mathematics in its quest to improve standards further. This has included making sure that lessons are much better tailored to pupils' different learning needs and tracking pupils' progress more carefully. These actions have had a positive impact and the gap between attainment in mathematics and other subjects, though small, is closing. In English, there is a difference in the standards of pupils' reading and writing. In the 2007 Year 6 tests, for example, 11 pupils attained one whole level higher in reading than in writing. In consequence, the school is rightly focusing on closing this gap by strengthening the curriculum for writing. Again, there are signs of positive impact.

The staff successfully make sure that there is a very positive atmosphere of support and care in which pupils thrive. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is shown in their high levels of attendance. As one pupil said, 'Everyone is kind and looks after us. Our teachers make lessons enjoyable'. As a result, pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Behaviour is excellent both in lessons and around the school. Pupils comment perceptively that 'Our lessons really challenge us and we like that'. These comments reflect the consistently good teaching. Teachers question pupils well and make learning interesting by providing good quality activities. They also ensure that pupils know both what the lesson's objectives are and what they have to do to be successful. Pupils frequently enjoy and engage in paired working and this enables them to practise speaking and listening. High quality collaborative working was observed, for example, in a Year 6 science lesson when pupils successfully identified the range of forces in the flight of a rocket. Pupils' discussion was mature and reflective and they gently challenged each other's reasoning.

Pupils have a highly developed understanding of staying safe and they adopt healthy lifestyles. They know who to turn to if they are experiencing problems and confidently state that difficulties are quickly rectified. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. They relish this and enjoy being members of the school council, helping in the office at lunchtimes, being rangers to look after the heathland and being playground 'buddies'. In addition, pupils have a keenly developed understanding of their own local community. They raise money for local charities, take part in the Fleet carnival, and recently the school choir enjoyed singing with the Hart Male Voice Choir.

Although parents are supportive of the school, a number expressed the view that the school does not take sufficient account of their views nor keep them sufficiently well informed. These concerns were investigated and it was found that the school does much more than many schools.

The good curriculum has a positive impact on learning and gives pupils many opportunities to participate in school life such as in the good range of clubs and also the focused curriculum sessions such as the Year 6 science 'water week' and the creative arts week. The school helps to make learning real by ensuring that pupils undertake a number of visits that link to their topics. Year 6, for example, visited the National Gallery and the Science Museum in the week

of the inspection. Pupils enjoy the wide range of sporting opportunities available for them and a particularly high proportion of pupils receive instrumental lessons from specialist teachers. In lessons, pupils are able to link subjects together. For example, Year 4 pupils when studying information texts were writing the sequencing of the stages of mummification, which supported their history topic on the Egyptians. The history and religious education curriculum has improved considerably since the previous inspection when weaknesses were identified.

Excellent provision for the pupils' care guidance and support impacts positively on pupils' academic development as well as ensuring that personal development is outstanding. Since the arrival of the new headteacher, additional rigour and detail have been applied to the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress. This, alongside the focus on strengthening learning, has enabled teachers and pupils to check progress and move towards the very challenging targets that are set. The tracking system successfully ensures early identification of those pupils who need additional help. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress. Pupils know their targets well, particularly in writing, and they know what to do to improve.

The new headteacher provides excellent leadership. He has built on the strengths found at the time of the previous inspection and has also ensured that the school has improved well following a recent turbulent period. Working with the effective and newly organised leadership team and new deputy headteacher, he has established an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses. This has enabled focused improvement projects to be set up and demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement. The staff work closely together as a team and all staff are given a voice in decision-making and are held to account for their work. This marks an improvement since the previous inspection when teachers with responsibilities did not check provision or standards sufficiently well. Staff now willingly take on responsibility, and they provide good leadership. Governance is effective and is now more streamlined in its organisation which enables governors to provide high quality support for the school. Governors are committed to the school's further improvement and because of the quality and range of information they now gain from the headteacher and their links with staff, they are in a stronger position to provide challenge.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on the work to close the gap in pupils' performance in reading and writing.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Velmead Junior School, Fleet, GU52 7LG

Thank you for welcoming me to your school when I visited you recently. I enjoyed meeting you and watching you learn and play. I was pleased to hear that you thoroughly enjoy school and learning.

Your school is good and getting better. You told me that you feel really safe in school and I can see that this is because the staff take excellent care of you. The adults work hard for you and the teaching is good. Your behaviour is excellent and you take care to make sure that all pupils enjoys it as much as you do. I was impressed with your levels of concentration and your good learning in lessons and how well you know your targets and how to improve your work. As a result you achieve well and reach well above average standards in English and science. Your progress overall is good.

I have asked your headteacher and teachers to continue to ensure that your attainment in writing becomes as high as it is in reading. You can help by continuing to work hard to meet your targets.

Best wishes for the future.

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector