

Serco Inspections  
Cedar House  
21 William Street  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham  
B15 1LH

**OFSTED**  
T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**SERCO**  
Direct T 0121 683 2888



3 February 2011

Mrs Linda Dawson  
Acting Headteacher  
Whitecotes Primary School  
Whitecotes Lane  
Walton  
Chesterfield  
S40 3HJ

Dear Mrs Dawson

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Whitecotes Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Wednesday 2 February, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and Chair of Governors for their time and courtesy. I would like to particularly thank the pupils for the enjoyable time I spent talking with them.

There is currently an acting headteacher in post following the unforeseen, early retirement of the previous headteacher in November 2010. A new substantive headteacher has been appointed and is due to take up post in April 2011.

As a result of the inspection on 24 November 2009 the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made inadequate progress in making improvements and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The key factor in the judgement of inadequate progress is that although overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been broadly average over the last three years, too few older pupils are making the expected progress based on their prior attainment at Key Stage 1. The satisfactory progress which most pupils make throughout Key Stage 1 is not sustained at Key Stage 2. In lessons observed jointly with senior leaders, many older pupils continue to make inadequate progress and as a result, do not reach the standards they are capable of in English or mathematics by the end of Year 6.

The quality of teaching is variable throughout the school. It is not strong enough, particularly at Key Stage 2, to help pupils make the progress required to raise their attainment. In many lessons expectations are not high enough, there is too much teacher-talk and few opportunities for pupils to develop independence. Where teaching is better, it includes creative activities, effective use of challenging questions, high expectations and good subject knowledge. This lack of consistency in the quality of teaching across the school hinders pupils from making the best progress they can, all of the time. Teachers' planning does not always fully take into account the results of assessment, prior attainment, differing abilities or barriers to learning. Planning often provides a description of what pupils will do rather than identifying the specific targets which each group of pupils are required to learn. As a result, some pupils' progress is not as good as it might be. Additionally, not all teachers check frequently enough how well pupils are doing and there are missed opportunities to move more able pupils onto new work more quickly. Although there is some effective use of personal learning targets, too many pupils do not know or understand their targets and are not involved in evaluating their own progress towards achieving these. Marking is carried out regularly. However, it does not always give pupils enough advice on how to improve their work and so does not contribute effectively to improving progress and raising attainment.

The weaknesses in pupils' progress and outcomes, as well as in the quality of teaching and learning, have not yet been addressed by the school's leaders. The pace of change to address continuing underachievement has been too slow and lacked sufficient rigour. Although senior leaders undertake monitoring activities and track pupils' progress, the information gained is not evaluated or used well enough to ensure the necessary, rapid improvements. There is insufficient analysis of the progress made by different groups of pupils in order to take timely action to improve the quality of provision, or to tackle underachievement. Teachers are not sufficiently held to account for the progress of all pupils in their classes. This has resulted in inadequate progress for many older pupils since the last inspection and consequently, demonstrates that the school has an inadequate capacity to improve.

The governing body is ably led by the Chair, who has worked hard to develop the role since the last inspection. She is becoming more fully involved in the ongoing evaluation of the school's work and as a result, is developing a clearer understanding of what needs to be done to secure the necessary improvements. However, the full governing body is not yet rigorous enough in ensuring that senior leaders are sufficiently challenged, or held to account.

The support received from the local authority has not been sufficiently focused to have had sufficient impact on enabling the school to make the improvements that are urgently required. However, the work carried out by the new School Improvement Partner since September 2010 demonstrates that he has quickly become familiar with the issues and is ensuring that a more appropriate level of monitoring and support is now being put into place.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2009.**

- Raise achievement and standards by:
  - ensuring teachers use assessment information to support their planning
  - making lessons challenging, particularly for the more able
  - setting individual targets so pupils know what to do to improve their work
  - marking work regularly so pupils know how well they are doing and what they could do better
  - giving pupils more opportunities to learn and discover for themselves.
- Ensure leaders and managers take swift and effective action to improve outcomes for pupils by:
  - rigorously monitoring teaching and learning to ensure it is consistently good
  - holding teachers to account for the progress of all pupils in their classes
  - ensuring assessments made about pupils' progress are accurate and used to inform management decisions and future planning.
- Ensure that the governing body:
  - Monitors and evaluates the work of the school and holds staff to account for standards achieved.