

Whitecotes Primary School

Whitecotes Lane, Walton, Chesterfield, S40 3HJ

Inspection dates

14–15 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- In Years 2 to 4, standards are low and pupils' achievement is inadequate. A legacy of weak teaching has meant that pupils in these year groups have not developed their skills in reading, writing and mathematics effectively.
- Some pupils do not know their number facts well enough. Pupils' writing occasionally lacks depth, variety and control. Some Year 2 pupils have difficulty recognising common, everyday words while reading.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils varies too much. Extra government funding has not been used well enough to direct teaching for them.
- Teachers' expectations for pupils' progress are not consistently high. Teachers do not always set pupils suitably challenging work.
- Teachers do not consistently provide good opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge quickly and to practise new learning.
- Teachers do not make the most effective use of teaching assistants to speed up pupils' learning.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are not well developed. This sometimes affects their enjoyment of learning, their powers of concentration and limits their contribution in lessons.
- In spite of recent improvements, pupils' behaviour and the school's work to keep pupils safe, are not yet of good quality.
- A few subject and other leaders do not possess the skills and expertise needed to monitor and to develop teaching in their areas of responsibility.

The school has the following strengths

- The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well. Children enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities, especially indoors. They are better taught than most older pupils, so they achieve well.
- Pupils in Year 6 are now making fast progress.
- New appointments to the teaching staff are helping to improve pupils' progress.
- The executive headteacher and governors are demonstrating the capacity to drive improvement. They have improved teaching and pupils' progress in writing in most year groups.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching during visits to classrooms to check on pupils' learning. On two visits, they were accompanied by the executive headteacher.
- Inspectors heard some pupils in Year 2 reading. They looked in detail at samples of pupils' work in Years 3 and 4.
- Meetings were held with school staff, a group of pupils, four members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 24 questionnaires completed by staff and the 32 responses made by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They also looked at parents' responses to the school's recent questionnaire.
- Inspectors checked a range of evidence including: monitoring records; consultants' reports; the school and local authority improvement plans; the school's own data on pupils' attainment and progress; and policies, procedures and practice relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Derek Aitken, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Trevor Swann

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than most primary schools.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught full time in two Reception classes.
- Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority, is above average, at about four in ten.
- At around three in ten, the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well above average.
- The substantive headteacher has had long periods of leave of absence since October 2012. The deputy headteacher has been absent since June 2014. The headteacher of a local school undertook the role of acting headteacher from March 2014 to August 2014. She was succeeded in this role in September 2014 by another headteacher who was appointed executive headteacher from 1 January 2015.
- Two members of the senior leadership team took on additional roles in October 2014.
- Four teachers, including three colleagues new to teaching, took up post in September 2014.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high expectations for pupils and set them suitably challenging work
 - provide better opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge quickly and to practise new learning
 - make good use of teaching assistants to speed up pupils' learning.
- Raise pupils' achievement in Years 2 to 4 and enhance pupils' attitudes to their learning by:
 - improving pupils' speaking and listening skills to develop their powers of concentration, self-confidence and participation in class discussions
 - ensuring that all pupils know their number facts and that they can apply this knowledge confidently to solving problems
 - ensuring that pupils practise the skills of extended writing in their everyday work
 - improving younger pupils' skills in recognising common words.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - all subject and other leaders have the skills and expertise to assist the executive headteacher in building solidly on recent improvements in teaching and in pupils' progress
 - leaders and governors carefully check the impact of strategies used to raise the achievement of potentially vulnerable groups, including disadvantaged pupils.

An external review of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The prolonged periods of absence of key senior leaders has meant that, for much of the time since the previous inspection, the school lacked effective leadership in several important areas of its work. Systems and procedures for managing the performance of staff withered, and staff at all levels did not have the supervision or direction needed to be held properly to account.
- Expectations for pupils have not been high enough. The school has not ensured equal opportunities for all pupils to succeed. Pupils' achievement, including that of potentially vulnerable groups, has not been checked closely, so underperformance has not received due attention. Weaknesses in pupils' skills have not been tackled in a timely way and too much time has elapsed before leaders have sought to measure the impact of measures taken.
- Some weaknesses in subject and other leadership, together with underdeveloped assessment procedures, have meant that staff have not tracked pupils' progress closely or used this information well to plan teaching. The school is in the early stages of working towards full implementation of its preferred approach to assessment following withdrawal of National Curriculum levels.
- Arrangements for tracking the performance of all groups of pupils have now improved considerably and some recent adjustments have been made to the use of the pupil premium funding. However, this funding was not targeted well and the school is not using it in well-planned ways to ensure that gaps in attainment are closed quickly in all year groups.
- Under the purposeful leadership of the acting headteachers, the deterioration in the school's effectiveness has been halted. Considerable gains have been made in all areas of the school's work and this process has accelerated since September 2014. For example, the identification of pupils classified as having special educational needs has been reviewed and numbers reduced by two-thirds so that resources are now being targeted more effectively. However, the impact of actions taken in this area has not yet been measured.
- The executive headteacher has implemented tighter systems and procedures to develop consistency in the work of staff and to raise their performance. Her short- and long-term plans show that she understands clearly what needs to be done to improve the school further. Subject and other leaders are responding well to the executive headteacher's firm leadership but a few have yet to develop the expertise to enable them to monitor, plan and lead improvements well in their allocated areas of responsibility.
- The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has ensured that good provision has been maintained continuously for Reception children.
- The curriculum has been adjusted in several useful ways to target weaknesses in pupils' literacy skills; for example, to provide increased time for phonics (the sounds that letters make) and the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar. These actions are contributing well to pupils' improved progress in writing in some year groups.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has been patchy. The curriculum is now being adapted to provide better opportunities for pupils to find out about life in modern Britain and to consider questions of diversity. Useful actions have been taken to help pupils develop into responsible, self-confident, young adults and to play a more productive part in school life, for example, through assemblies, the new school council and anti-bullying committee. However, these are not yet firmly established in the school's work.
- The local authority was initially slow to become involved with the school after the previous inspection when its performance started to deteriorate. In the last six months, having identified the school as causing concern, its consultants have supported the school intensively, working to a clearly defined action plan.

■ National sports funding has been spent well. It has been used, for example, to improve the proficiency of staff in teaching skills in specialist activities, such as gymnastics, and to increase pupils' participation in a wider range of sports and competitions. Actions taken have been evaluated, using a range of criteria, to assess the impact on pupils' health and well-being. For example, balance bike training has enabled many younger pupils to cycle competently by the end of the programme.

■ The governance of the school:

- The prolonged absences of key senior leaders have, until recently, restricted governors' capacity to contribute effectively to the school's work. The documentation received by governors did not have the necessary, detailed information to guide their meetings and discussions, which consequently lacked focus and strategic direction.
- Since the appointments of the acting headteachers, especially since September 2014, governors are now much better informed. They have reviewed data on pupils' performance last year and have allocated funds appropriately to support staff in tackling weaknesses in pupils' skills. Their knowledge of pupils' performance this year, including that of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, is up to date and accurate. However, governors have not yet fully checked the impact of the strategies, funded through the extra resource, on the achievement of this group of pupils.
- Governors know where the strengths of teaching lie and where further improvements are needed. They are becoming more involved in the process of relating teachers' pay to their performance.
- Governors ensure that current statutory requirements for safeguarding are met and are effective.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. The positive attitudes to learning and behaviour they develop in Reception are not consistently well built on in the later key stages.
- Sometimes, teaching does not inspire pupils to develop a deep love of learning or great enjoyment of life at school. In lessons, pupils mostly relate well to each other and to staff, and they concentrate well on focused tasks. On a few occasions, a minority of pupils become distracted when they are required to listen to the teachers' explanations or their classmates' answers, and this slows their learning.
- In public areas, such as in the playground or in the corridors, pupils usually mix freely with each other and behave well. Improvements to break and lunchtime arrangements have contributed to more orderly playtimes by giving pupils more space in which to play and better access to playground equipment.
- Most pupils are polite and considerate towards each other. They usually respond well to instructions and requests from staff. Year 6 pupils are mature and reflective. They have developed purposeful attitudes to their work.
- Until recently, insufficient attention has been paid to promoting some aspects of pupils' well-being. Staff are now making better use of strategies, such as the 'behaviour ladder', to model good standards of behaviour. Consequently, incidents of unacceptable behaviour are now much reduced. Good use is being made of assemblies to explain to pupils what good attitudes to learning look like and to raise their aspirations for achieving well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Until recently, there were inconsistencies in some of the school's procedures for monitoring and promoting this aspect of the school's work. For example, little account had been taken of pupils' views so that their perceptions on questions of behaviour and safety were not examined or acted upon in a timely way. Pupils' understanding of what bullying means and the different forms it can take were underdeveloped.
- Senior leaders have acted swiftly following an analysis of safeguarding practice to improve systems and procedures; for example, by setting up pupil committees and training lunchtime supervisors. Pupils say that the school is welcoming to new pupils and that they feel safe.

- Pupils understand and accept the new rewards and sanctions systems, and value the incentives for good behaviour and regular attendance.
- While leaders have improved site security in the last few years, pupils report that there is sometimes litter on muddy patches on the school playground which can cause them to trip up. For their part, a few pupils take unnecessary risks; for example, when playing exuberantly on frosty surfaces in cold weather.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- Over time, while teaching in Reception has been good, too much of the teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 has been inadequate. Discontinuity in staffing, including staff absence, weak teaching and assessment practices, resulted in a decline in quality since the previous inspection. A very few inadequacies remain. While there have been clear improvements in teaching since September 2014, data show that too much teaching in Years 2 to 5 requires improvement. This prevents pupils in these year groups from catching up quickly the ground they have lost in previous years.
- Not all teachers have high expectations for pupils' progress. While staff have recently improved their understanding of the levels at which their pupils are working, some teachers have still to use this information consistently well to enable them to set pupils suitably challenging work. They do not always teach or practise literacy and numeracy skills systematically to enable pupils to acquire knowledge quickly and to reinforce what they have just learnt.
- Teachers' planning and the strategies they use are sometimes overly focused on capturing and holding pupils' interest, rather than bringing about the intended learning. While pupils mostly settle well to the tasks they are given, these tasks are not always planned carefully enough to ensure that the best use is made of the time available and that pupils have enough time to practise new learning.
- Over time, speaking and listening skills have not been developed well. Consequently, a minority of pupils sometimes lack concentration when required to listen carefully to the teacher's explanations or their classmates' verbal contributions. They lose interest and do not develop the confidence needed to take part in question and answer routines.
- Limited planned opportunities, in some year groups, for pupils to apply their writing skills in other subjects mean that the writing they do on a daily basis sometimes lacks depth and variety.
- Until recently, too many pupils who were falling behind due to weak teaching were included in the group of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Leaders did not know precisely where resources, for example, teaching assistants, could best be allocated to direct support to where it was most necessary. While this situation is now much improved, teachers are not yet making consistently good use of this additional help in lessons to support pupils' learning.
- Good, new appointments to the teaching staff have been purposefully allocated to the year groups where stability and improvements were most urgent. This, together with adjustments to the timetable, has been an important factor in improving current rates of progress across the school. Teaching is consistently good in Reception. In Year 6, teachers use ongoing assessment and questioning well to challenge pupils to explain their thinking in detail and to motivate them to work hard.
- Teachers' marking has improved and this is helping pupils to understand better what they need to do next to improve their work.

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- Standards, at the end of Year 6 in 2013 and 2014, were average but markedly lower than at the time of the previous inspection. In both years, pupils made inadequate progress across Key Stage 2. In 2014, while pupils' attainment in reading improved, it declined in writing and in spelling, punctuation and

grammar. Only half the boys attained the nationally expected Level 4 in writing, while few girls attained the higher Level 5 in mathematics.

- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 were working about half a term behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. Although the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 has improved in the last three years, they were about two terms behind other pupils nationally in these skills. Across the school, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils varies. In spite of some recent improvements, these pupils are not yet making adequate progress in Years 2 to 4.
- Pupils' attainment when they join Year 1 is usually close to average. Standards at the end of Year 2 declined sharply last year, especially in reading and writing, and significant numbers of pupils failed to make the progress expected of them in these skills. A legacy of discontinuity in staffing, and weaknesses in teaching, underpin pupils' underachievement and depress standards, which continue to be well below those expected for pupils' ages in Years 2 to 4.
- In a few year groups, pupils' knowledge of basic number facts is insecure. This prevents them from applying their calculation skills quickly and accurately to solving problems in mathematics. Some of the work pupils do in writing in Years 2 to 4 lacks depth and shows weaknesses in handwriting, and in the structure of sentences and paragraphs. The early reading skills of some Year 2 pupils are underdeveloped, which sometimes prevents them from recognising simple, common words.
- While some of the most-able pupils do well, the most able, in common with other groups, underachieve. Teaching has not been good enough to deepen these pupils' knowledge and skills systematically, to set them harder work, and to enable more of these pupils to work at suitably challenging levels.
- Disabled pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs underachieve. Until September 2014, weak arrangements for identifying their needs and checking their progress meant that they did not get the right support quickly enough to enable them to do well.
- Recent improvements in provision are accelerating rates of progress, markedly so in Year 1. In Year 6, altered timetable arrangements, combined with good teaching, are enabling all groups of pupils to make rapid progress. A new initiative, to provide pupils with regular opportunities to write at length, is successfully raising standards in the other Key Stage 2 classes. However, the work that pupils carry out daily, in writing, is not consistently of a similar quality.

The early years provision

is good

- Children's skills, when they join Reception, are below those typical for their age, especially in literacy. They make good progress in all areas of learning so that they are well prepared for Year 1. The percentage of children who reached a good level of development increased in 2014 and just exceeded the national average.
- Well-understood roles, responsibilities and routines help children learn well. Good staffing ratios allow staff to build strong relationships with children and engage them in close conversation. Adults have strengthened their questioning techniques. Regular and skilful use of open-ended questions promotes children's curiosity and thinking, and develops their speaking and listening skills well.
- Children learn eagerly. They respond well to the stimulating opportunities provided, particularly in the indoor areas. They quickly forge friendly relationships with each other and respect the need to share resources, such as tablet computers, fairly. They comment on their learning and new experiences, and they work well with each other on paired or small-group tasks.
- Children are resilient learners. They find much to excite their attention in the well-resourced classrooms. They concentrate fully on what they are doing and see tasks through to completion, for example, those which are designed to develop their handling skills. Their keen interest helps them to work with minimal supervision, become independent and to stay safe as they move purposefully between the activities of their choice.

- Staff monitor children's work carefully. They ensure equal opportunities through short one-to-one tasks with individual children to close gaps in learning.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well. Children's achievements are analysed carefully to identify comparative weaknesses in their skills and to direct staff training and teaching to remedy them.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	112775
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	453713

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ellie Reynolds
Headteacher	Susan Chapman (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2013
Telephone number	01246 234381
Fax number	01246 208519
Email address	info@whitecotes.derbyshire.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2015

