

# Inspection of Whitecross Hereford

Three Elms Road, Hereford, Herefordshire HR4 0RN

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Inspection dates: 7 and 8 June 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Inadequate

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Senior leaders' high aspirations permeate school life. They expect high standards of all staff, pupils and themselves. On the whole, these standards are met. All staff want pupils to succeed and thrive. Pupils enjoy school and do well. The motto of 'Excellence for all – Excellence from all' is evident.

Pupils' behaviour is good. Lessons are generally calm and free from disruption. Pupils are friendly, courteous and welcoming. Positive relationships between staff and pupils are commonplace and a pleasure to observe. Pupils describe their teachers as kind and caring. They are confident in their teachers to swiftly deal with any incidents when they occur.

Leaders place great emphasis on pupils' personal development. They have focused on supporting pupils' mental health, personal growth and fostering positive attitudes to learning. For example, pupils speak passionately about Nell, the school dog, who greets all pupils as they arrive to school in the morning. As a result of this work, pupils value the education their teachers provide.

Leaders have planned a wide-ranging offer for pupils to follow their interests and talents. This includes numerous sporting activities, instrumental lessons, clubs, visits, trips and opportunities to take on leadership roles within the school. Pupils speak positively about the many things they can get involved in.

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

Senior leaders have designed a curriculum to meet their high aspirations for pupils. This curriculum is ambitious, broad and balanced. Leaders have mapped out in each subject what knowledge and skills pupils should learn and when. Subject leaders have logically sequenced the learning in their subjects. This ensures that pupils build up their knowledge over time, including the disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Teachers use assessment very well to inform their teaching. They check effectively that pupils have understood everything they have been taught. Teachers quickly adjust their teaching to fill any gaps in knowledge. As a result, pupils do well.

Leaders ensure that the provision for pupils with SEND helps them to be successful. Staff quickly identify anyone who may need extra help and put support in place. Teachers receive a range of relevant information about pupils. This includes how best to support them in lessons. Generally, this works well and pupils receive the help they need to learn. However, at times the support provided by additional adults is less effective. Staff either intervene too late or too early. When this happens, pupils are not able to access their learning and disengage from it.

Leaders support pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read very well. Teachers quickly assess who needs support. Pupils receive individualised intervention to help them become proficient readers. Pupils are getting better and say that they know how important reading is because of this help.

The curriculum to further pupils' personal development is well planned. Pupils learn about a range of topics to ensure they become well-informed young adults. This includes work around healthy relationships, substance misuse and sex education. Pupils learn about possible career routes and further education options. Leaders use alternative providers well to support the education of a few pupils. These placements are carefully chosen to meet pupils' needs and career aspirations. As a result, pupils thrive on these placements. Leaders have ensured that pupils are well prepared for their next steps and future life.

The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly. However, there remains a number of pupils who are persistently absent. This means that they are missing valuable learning time.

Senior leaders and those responsible for governance have a strong understanding of their school's strengths and weaknesses. They work with determination to address any shortcomings. For example, they have ensured that there are strong safeguarding arrangements in place.

Parents are complimentary about the education and pastoral support offered to their children. Staff are unanimous in their support for leaders. They feel valued and say that leaders are mindful of their workload and well-being. They readily refer to the school as the 'Whitecross family'.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a robust culture of and vigilance around safeguarding. All staff receive regular safeguarding training and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. Staff swiftly report any concerns to the expert safeguarding team.

The safeguarding team works effectively together to ensure that pupils and families receive the help and support they need. Leaders work swiftly to ensure that pupils are kept safe. They work well with outside agencies when needed.

Leaders make appropriate checks on anyone who comes into their school and keep accurate records. They have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some additional adults do not provide effective support to pupils with SEND. Support is either too slow or staff intervene too quickly, thus not giving pupils enough thinking time. When this happens, pupils become confused and are not able to access their learning. Leaders should ensure that all staff provide consistently effective support to these pupils in lessons.
- Some pupils continue to be frequently absent from school. While the number is declining, it remains high. This means that those pupils miss out on aspects of their education and their learning is interrupted. Leaders should ensure that pupils attend school frequently to benefit from the education on offer.

### 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.

### 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139189
<b>Local authority</b>	Herefordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10257426
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	937
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Marc Hales
<b>Headteacher</b>	Timothy Knapp
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.whitecross.hereford.sch.uk">www.whitecross.hereford.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 to 14 December 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school makes use of two unregistered alternative providers for a small number of its pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteachers and other senior leaders. The lead inspector held a meeting with governors and trustees, including the chair of board of trustees. Meetings were held with the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator and curriculum leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised school documents and procedures relating to safeguarding. Inspectors spoke to staff, including support staff, about safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and interactions during lessons and at break and lunchtimes and visited the school's intervention base. Inspectors spoke to many pupils and staff to gather their views.
- Inspectors spoke to some parents and sought their views about the school.

### **Inspection team**

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Russell Hinton	Ofsted Inspector
Huw Bishop	Ofsted Inspector
Wayne Simner	His Majesty's Inspector

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