

Tribal Group  
1-4 Portland  
Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR  
T 0845 123 6001  
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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Ms D Strutt  
The Headteacher  
Whitecross High School  
Three Elms Road  
Hereford  
Herefordshire  
HR4 0RN

Dear Ms Strutt

### Ofsted Monitoring of Grade 3 Schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 October 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please convey my thanks to the students who took the time to speak to me about their views.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection on 20 and 21 September 2006, the school was asked to: improve the quality of teaching so that students find lessons challenging and achieve more; improve the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation so that the school meets challenging performance targets; and, increase the variety of learning routes to meet the needs of the pupils more effectively.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The headteacher judges that whilst teaching is satisfactory overall the proportion of good or better teaching has increased since the previous inspection. Evidence gathered during the inspection supports this judgement. Over half of the lessons seen were of good quality. The pace of learning varies between classes, but it is usually brisk because students respond well to challenging questioning and tasks that require them to analyse evidence and evaluate outcomes. Humanities teaching is particularly strong because lessons include opportunities for collaborative work and students use these well to discuss and develop ideas. These are important learning skills for their future education. The school has worked successfully to reduce the small proportion of inadequate teaching and learning. The drive given by the very effective teachers in the school's specialism, sports, has been a major factor in securing this gain. They provide exemplar lessons for colleagues to observe and

discuss. Regular assessments ensure that students are aware of the levels they are working at and aiming for. The quality of marking has improved, with students receiving in depth feedback on identified assessed work. Homework is consistently set and recorded. Lesson observation documentation provides a clear analysis of the impact of teaching on student learning and progress.

Monitoring and evaluation have improved since the previous inspection. Support from the local authority and the school improvement partner has focused on this aspect of leadership and management. The new monitoring and evaluation policy highlights the contribution all staff make to achieving the school's targets and how these relate directly to teaching and learning. It provides a strong structure for all levels of leadership to gain an accurate view of the quality of provision. Most departments use lesson observations, work scrutiny and detailed subject reviews effectively to build on underpinning strengths and to identify factors that are barriers to better learning. Senior leaders are actively building capacity where this is not the case. Good use is made of information gained from key assessments taken every term. Detailed analyses enable the school to be clear about any underachievement of students and underperformance by departments. GCSE results in 2007 saw standards and achievement rise. Senior leaders are committed to accelerating the rate of improvement and use data to set ambitious, but attainable, targets.

To increase the variety of learning routes the school conducted a thorough review of the Key Stage 4 curriculum. In addition to producing an ambitious long term plan, it has acted promptly to ensure that the current provision offers choices that meet students' needs. Students now have a suitable range of courses to select from according to their interests and aptitudes. They value greatly the advice they receive when choosing their options and the quality of provision in courses such as leisure and tourism, engineering and horticulture. The school's plans for future curriculum developments are thorough and benefit from the strong drive provided by the sports specialism and the ICT department.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley  
Her Majesty's Inspector