

Whitecotes Primary Academy

Whitecotes Lane, Walton, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 3HJ

Inspection dates

6–7 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The level of pupils' persistent absence is far too high. This is impeding the academic progress of pupils who do not attend regularly.
- Leaders have not ensured that teaching and learning have improved sufficiently or fast enough to help pupils catch up and to halt the decline in standards in key stage 2.
- Until recently, the trust has been ineffective in supporting school improvement.
- Senior leaders have not informed the governing body effectively regarding the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements. Governors are therefore not able to hold leaders to account.
- Senior leaders do not give subject leaders enough time to undertake their roles.
- The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is too variable.
- Leaders do not ensure that all teachers have high expectations of pupils, or that the training teachers receive is effective.
- The most and least able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. The curriculum is not planned well enough to meet their needs.
- Leaders have not ensured that the pupil premium funding is having the necessary impact in supporting disadvantaged pupils. These pupils are not well prepared for secondary school.
- Leaders have not made sure that the small number of pupils who find it difficult to control their behaviour are supported well enough. Statutory paperwork regarding the exclusion of pupils is not completed.
- Too many teachers do not plan learning well enough. Pupils sometimes do not understand what teachers want them to do.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders who were present at the inspection demonstrate the skills and expertise to help improve the school.
- Good teaching in early years results in children getting off to a good start. The early years provision is well led.
- Better teaching in key stage 1 is leading to improved attainment by the end of Year 2.
- Most pupils are polite, work well together and try their best to succeed. They have positive attitudes to learning.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' behaviour, by:
 - urgently reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from the school, especially those who are disadvantaged
 - ensuring that pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are given effective support to do this, thus reducing the number of repeat exclusions
 - making sure that any poor behaviour from pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes is addressed quickly, fairly and effectively
 - ensuring that the school complies with legislation regarding pupils who are excluded.
- Improve teaching and learning and therefore pupils' outcomes, by making sure that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - those who need to catch up receive the support they need to do so and the most able are sufficiently challenged
 - teachers plan learning more effectively to help pupils build their knowledge and skills
 - teachers make clear to pupils the work they want them to produce in a lesson.
- Improve leadership and management, by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders focus relentlessly on driving up the quality of education, modelling clear and consistently high expectations for every pupil
 - leaders' checks on teaching lead to effective training and support to help teachers improve
 - subject leaders are provided with sufficient time and resources to raise the quality of teaching in the areas for which they are responsible
 - the support for pupils with SEND is reviewed regularly and adjusted when necessary so that these pupils make consistently good progress
 - leaders monitor the spending of additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that it is contributing sufficiently to raising these pupils' attainment
 - governors hold senior leaders rigorously to account for the impact of their actions, the quality of teaching and the progress and attainment of pupils.
- An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Senior leaders have failed to reduce the high proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school. This rate of absence is having a substantially detrimental effect on the academic progress of these pupils.
- The school's approach to improving attendance lacks urgency. Leaders do not support and sufficiently challenge parents and carers whose children miss too much school to ensure that these pupils attend regularly.
- The school's weak leadership over time and over-reliance on external consultants have resulted in the lack of a clear strategy to improve the school. Leaders whom inspectors met during the inspection have not received clear guidance about how to improve their areas of responsibility or provide support to teachers.
- Many parents are frustrated by the lack of improvement in the school. Almost half of the respondents to Parent View would not currently recommend the school to others.
- With the recent support of the external adviser, commissioned by the trust, the school has created an effective improvement plan. It details very clear checks that are needed to ensure the school is improving. However, leaders have not yet begun the process of carrying out these checks.
- Leaders have not provided teachers with the training they need to improve. Staff do not have the opportunity to share what they have learned with their colleagues. Actions agreed during staff meetings are not followed up to ensure they are making a difference to pupils' learning.
- Leaders are not able to provide clear information on the impact of the additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Leaders do not check that the support these pupils receive improves their attainment.
- The experienced leader for pupils with SEND has devised individual learning plans to support these pupils' progress. These plans are reviewed each term and shared with parents and pupils. The leader for pupils with SEND utilises the skills and knowledge of external agencies well to ensure that targets are relevant. However, the impact of the support these pupils receive is not reviewed effectively enough.
- Despite these weaknesses, there are signs of promise. The school's senior leaders have the capacity to improve the school and have begun to do so. They have secured good leadership in early years, and this has resulted in children receiving consistently effective teaching that meets their needs. Leaders have also ensured that teaching has improved overall in key stage 1. This is resulting in better progress and attainment for these pupils.
- The school's curriculum provides a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities. Pupils' books demonstrate learning about different faiths and cultures. Pupils speak positively about learning how to speak French, for instance. A typical comment was, 'I like French because I like finding new words.'
- Leaders spend the primary physical education (PE) and sport funding effectively. Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to develop their skills, for example in after-school

clubs that include those for archery and lacrosse. Leaders have devised a new scheme of work and employed sports coaches to improve teachers' skills. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to stay healthy.

- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. They show tolerance and respect towards each other and demonstrate a good understanding of different faiths. Pupils are aware of the importance of the school rules. They work well together, taking turns and collaborating in their learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Governance of the school

- The local governing body has not been effective in securing the necessary improvements in the school in key stage 2. Leaders do not provide governors with information about how well the school is progressing against its agreed priorities. Governors, however, are not insisting on this information and so the school leaders are not being held to account for the slow pace of improvement.
- The vice-chair of governors has a very good understanding of the performance of the school. However, despite her attempts at highlighting concerns, the governance committee still does not focus effectively on making the necessary improvements. Minutes of meetings show a lack of challenge and only a brief discussion on pupils' standards in key stage 2, which have remained too low for too long.
- The trust's response to improving the school has been ineffective. The recently appointed chief executive officer recognises that the trust has not supported the school well enough. The many external consultants commissioned over time, and conflicting advice the trust has given, have provided too many mixed messages.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff receive training at least annually. This includes information about radicalisation, female genital mutilation and cyber bullying. This training has been effective in developing their understanding of the different forms of abuse and the range of indicators that suggest a child may be being harmed.
- All leaders have received appropriate training in safer recruitment, paediatric first aid and fulfilling the role of designated safeguarding lead. Additional training has been provided to mid-day supervisors on basic first aid to enable them to ensure that minor injuries can be managed appropriately.
- The school's single central record is compliant with requirements. All staff have been checked to ensure that they are safe to work with children. Checks in personnel files showed that all documentation was present and up to date.
- Staff understand well the school's online safeguarding system. A comprehensive induction process ensures that new members of staff know how to raise concerns. Follow-up actions are timely and clear. The most vulnerable pupils in the school are flagged to ensure that staff can clearly identify these families and respond with the necessary urgency if needed.

- Leaders take appropriate action to help vulnerable families. Safeguarding records sampled by inspectors confirmed the school's involvement in regular meetings to support pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent.
- Not all teachers meet pupils' needs well enough by matching the work they set to what pupils can do. Historically weak teaching in the school, compounded by turbulence in staffing, means that many pupils have substantial gaps in their learning. Teachers do not plan so that pupils can progressively build their knowledge over a series of lessons.
- In too many classes in key stage 2, pupils are not supported to make sufficiently strong progress so that they catch up and leave the school with the knowledge and skills they need to start secondary school. Too often, the work they are given is undemanding and pupils lack focus. The lower attaining pupils are not assisted well enough to catch up, while the most able are not given work that makes them think deeply.
- Across key stage 1, however, improvements in the quality of teaching are securing better outcomes for these pupils. The work teachers give them is increasingly engaging and builds their skills effectively. For example, pupils enjoy writing for a range of purposes, including letters from fictional characters, non-chronological reports and story settings.
- In mathematics in key stage 1, pupils benefit from exploring number in a range of representations which supports their understanding well. They explore a wide range of mathematical concepts including shape, space and measures, fractions and the four operations. However, the most able do not always get to the more demanding work that will stretch and challenge their thinking and give them the skills to achieve well. This limits their learning and results in weaker progress.
- The school's appropriate focus on reading in key stage 1 is resulting in pupils attaining well in this subject. In phonics, teaching accurately meets each pupil's needs. A consistent approach helps pupils to know how to pronounce words that are new to them. One pupil explained how, 'phonics helps me to read the words in my book'. Pupils can talk about the stories they are reading and answer simple questions. Their reading diaries show that many parents are also very supportive of the teachers' approach to early reading and that they listen to their child read regularly at home.
- Across key stage 1, a new approach by teachers to support pupils' vocabulary development is helping pupils to use more adventurous words in their speaking and writing.
- There is evidence of some good teaching within key stage 2. In some classes, pupils demonstrate positive learning behaviours and are keen and eager to learn. Some teachers are adept at identifying misconceptions and skilfully use questions to develop pupils' understanding.
- In these classes, pupils also benefit from a range of extended writing opportunities. Opportunities to edit and re-draft their pieces of writing help them to produce work that meets the learning objective.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils are not shown consistently how to become successful, independent learners. Too many pupils are excessively dependent upon adult support and, if left unchecked, do not complete their work. Too often, they are not expected to use the resources that staff provide to support their learning. At other times, they do not ask for help from staff when it is needed.
- Some pupils believe that staff do not consistently deal with their concerns as well as they should do. Some pupils are confident that any instances of unkind behaviour from other pupils are addressed effectively. However, others say that this is not always the case. Only around three quarters of parents who responded to Parent View feel that the school deals effectively with any bullying.
- Because of the school's curriculum, pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe. They receive lessons on water safety, road safety and staying safe online.
- The school's 'family service' during lunchtimes fosters positive relationships between pupils. A central plate of food is shared among each 'family' by the older pupils. The older pupils model good manners, as well as showing care and respect for others, in their 'family.' Once finished, each 'family' tidies its table and ensures that everything is put in its right place.
- Pupils are taught the importance of staying physically healthy. For example, during lunchtimes, inspectors heard pupils discussing and choosing fruit rather than a chocolate mousse as it was a healthier option. The school provides effective teaching of physical and mental health through the school's new PE curriculum.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities. School council members help the headteacher appropriately when making some decisions. Other pupils are keen to take different roles, such as helping to set out chairs for assembly, managing the music and overseeing entry into and exit from the hall.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Pupils' attendance rates are not good enough. Currently, one in five pupils misses at least the equivalent of a whole day of education every two weeks. For disadvantaged pupils, this rate is worse still, with one in four of these pupils absent from school regularly. School data shows that this is not improving.
- The school's published pupil exclusion rate is well above that seen nationally. Some pupils are given many repeat exclusions because they are not supported sufficiently well to help them manage their own behaviour. Checks made by inspectors on the school's processes and procedures for excluded pupils revealed that registers and letters home did not always match. Also, when pupils have needed to be physically

restrained for their own and other's safety, records do not show that parents have always been informed.

- Most pupils conduct themselves well in lessons. However, some sanctions, such as the removal of the 'privilege jumper' for Year 6 pupils, risk pupils visibly standing out more than those who behave well. Similarly, the placement of pupils into other classes for a week is not leading to enough improvements in their behaviour or progress. At breaktimes and lunchtimes, most pupils are well behaved.
- Around the school, pupils are polite and courteous. They hold the doors open for adults and say 'please' and 'thank you' appropriately.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over time, pupils in key stage 2 have not made the progress of which they are capable. Over the last two years, the progress they have made has been well below average in at least two out of the three subjects of reading, writing and mathematics.
- Because of gaps in their knowledge and skills, pupils do not leave well prepared for secondary school. Last year, only four in 10 pupils achieved the expected standard in these subjects combined.
- Very few pupils, around a third of that seen nationally, attain the combined higher standard by the time they leave the school. Progress for the most able pupils has not been fast enough.
- The progress for pupils with SEND is not consistently good because the support they receive is not sufficiently reviewed to ensure that it is effective.
- Although pupils' work shows that the progress that they are making overall is now better than it was, it is not sufficiently strong to enable them to catch up on missed learning. The proportion of pupils in the current Year 6 cohort who are on track to attain the expected standard by the time they leave the school remains well below the national average.
- Pupils are making good progress in key stage 1. As a result, their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics last year was much closer to the national average. Published data shows an encouraging three-year trend of improvement and work shows that the proportions on track to attain at least the standard expected in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as in phonics in Year 1, are now broadly in line with the national average.

Early years provision

Good

- Owing to effective leadership and good teaching in early years, children achieve well.
- Most children begin early years with levels of skills that are below those typically found in children of a similar age, particularly in reading and writing.
- Children make good progress from their starting points. As a result of consistently good teaching, the proportion of children who attain a good level of development is broadly in line with the national average. Most children are ready for Year 1.

- The early years leader has a good knowledge of the strengths of the education provided in early years. She has also created an effective development plan to help improve it further. She reviews this plan regularly to ensure she remains on track to achieve the goals she intends to. Recent developments in the provision include a more focused approach to ensuring that the most able children in early years are better challenged in their learning.
- The early years leader has a clear focus on ensuring that children are ready for key stage 1. Children work in small groups, working independently in their books. Adults help them to review their learning from previous sessions before setting their new learning challenges.
- Children enjoy working with the large number of well-balanced activities that challenge them. The activities are carefully planned to develop children's imagination and learning. The balance of focused learning, alongside independent creativity, provides children with a well-balanced curriculum across all areas of learning.
- Children persevere when they learn. They also cooperate well, sharing resources and engaging well with each other.
- Children enjoy using electronic devices to support their learning. Inspectors noted children filming their friends at play while staff skilfully introduced key vocabulary. The effective guidance and good stimulation that children received later gave children the skills and motivation to write at length and to create a story book.
- Children enjoy the challenge of problem solving in mathematics by, for example, trying to halve numbers. They are provided with some well-chosen resources to help them learn. These, alongside effective questioning, help children to make strong progress.
- An effective teaching assistant works alongside the skilled early years leader to ensure that children who are eligible for pupil premium funding learn well. She asks children questions that make them think and she adapts the tasks they are given so that their needs are met.
- The newly implemented online tracking tool provides an effective link between school and home. Parents and staff use it to share children's learning and to monitor how well children are progressing.

School details

Unique reference number	143117
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10087328

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mary McElvaney
Headteacher	Debra Ward
Telephone number	01246 234381
Website	www.whitecotes.derbyshire.sch.uk
Email address	info@whitecotes.derbyshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Whitecotes Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Approximately 80% of pupils are White British, with the remaining 20% made up from nine other ethnic groups.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is average. A small number of these pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- In September 2016, Whitecotes Primary School became an academy and joined the Cavendish Learning Trust. This is the school's first inspection since becoming an academy.

Information about this inspection

- The headteacher was not present during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed a range of teaching and learning in 11 lessons. Some lessons were observed jointly with a senior leader. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in books covering a wide range of subjects, abilities and year groups.
- Inspectors met with the school's external consultant, the deputy headteachers and leaders with responsibility for early years, English and mathematics, PE, SEND and pupil premium.
- Inspectors met with a member of the governing body and the trust's CEO.
- Inspectors considered the 17 responses from Parent View and spoke informally with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors met with several different groups of pupils and considered their views of the school. They also spoke informally to pupils during lessons and during lunchtimes and breaktimes.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including: leaders' self-evaluation of the school's performance; the school improvement plan; behaviour, attendance and exclusion records; minutes of governing body meetings; and external reviews and reports about the progress of the school. Inspectors considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection and safeguarding.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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