

Croft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111179
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	378242
Inspection dates	10–11 January 2012
Lead inspector	Tony Painter

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	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Hegarty/Michelle Hilton
Headteacher	Robert Blanchet
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

Tony Painter
Stephen Helm

Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 14 lessons taught by eight teachers and held discussions with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and the headteacher. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of school documents including planning, assessment tracking records and policies for safeguarding and other matters. They examined staff and pupil questionnaire responses as well as 84 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

Information about the school

This school is around the average size for primary schools and almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. Government floor standards have been exceeded in each of the last three years.

Since the previous inspection, the school has had some leadership changes. An acting headteacher led the school for two terms before the new permanent headteacher took up his post in summer 2011.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It has an outstanding positive ethos of care, support and safeguarding that ensures that pupils gain confidence and mature extremely well. As a result, pupils have great confidence that staff will support them if ever they have concerns. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary.
- Pupils achieve well from starting points that are broadly typical for their ages. They exceed the nationally expected rates of progress in all parts of the school. By the time they leave school, pupils' attainment is above the national average. However, pupils' attainment in English, while still above average, has remained somewhat lower than the high standards in mathematics.
- Good teaching throughout the school ensures effective learning in lessons, helping pupils of all ability levels to gain skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. New assessment and planning systems are focusing teaching well and accelerating rates of progress in all subjects. However, teachers apply the systems with greater precision and clarity in mathematics than in English.
- Teachers' high expectations and very good relationships with pupils effectively motivate pupils of all abilities to try their best. Skilful questioning extends learning by making pupils think hard. Recent action to promote pupils' speaking and listening skills is giving pupils greater confidence to express their ideas. Pupils respond very positively and say lessons are becoming more interesting and challenging.
- Thorough self-assessment has accurately identified the relative weaknesses in the school and rapid action, although at an early stage, is already beginning to show impact. Good leadership is ensuring strong teamwork. All school staff and the governing body are working together very effectively to further raise the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure English teaching is consistently good or better to match that in mathematics, by:
 - sharing the best teaching practice currently evident within the school
 - refining and sharpening the use of assessment information to identify objectives and match tasks to pupils' different ability levels
 - ensuring all pupils maintain a clear focus on what they need to learn.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

In lessons throughout the school, pupils show great enjoyment of their learning and they speak very positively about the wider range of activities that have recently been introduced. Older pupils say that they enjoy the way that lessons are now frequently challenging them to think. Pupils' outstanding behaviour and highly positive attitudes make a significant and effective contribution to their learning. Pupils pay good attention to teachers, showing enthusiasm and a desire to join in and give answers to questions. They generally respond quickly to the consistent classroom routines and apply themselves well to tasks, showing pride in their work and concentrating hard. Pupils enjoy opportunities to use their basic skills in an increasingly wide range of well-focused activities. Year 3 pupils, for example, applied themselves extremely well in small groups when tackling increasingly complex mental calculations. Similarly, Year 1 pupils enthusiastically applied new strategies to solving word problems.

Pupils join the school with skills and experiences that are broadly those typical for their age. The good overall progress they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage is effectively maintained through the school. The school's Year 6 overall test results have remained significantly above average over time, representing good achievement. This accurately reflects parents' and carers' views that their children are making good progress. Pupils' reading standards by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time they leave the school are above average. However, although throughout the school and over time English standards have been above average, they have not been as strong as those in mathematics. The school is already taking action; new and accurate assessment systems now show increasing numbers of pupils are making accelerated progress in English. As a result, the school predicts improvements in the 2012 Year 6 test results although this work is still at a relatively early stage. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have effective support to ensure that they make similar good progress to that of pupils as a whole. Tracking indicates that many of these pupils exceed national progress rates and clearly close gaps on pupils as a whole. There are no significant variations in the rates of progress for different groups in the school.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers overwhelmingly feel that teaching is good and the inspection fully endorses this view. Teachers establish very good relationships with pupils and clearly express their high expectations. Pupils respond very well and show their highly positive attitudes and enjoyment of learning through hard work and concentration. Activities make effective use of resources and frequently excite and involve pupils well. Year 6 pupils, for example, showed great enthusiasm when working in new groups to tackle a practical investigation into percentages.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and make increasingly effective use of the school's improved assessment systems. Detailed lesson plans identify outcomes and tasks for pupils of different abilities, frequently matched very well to pupils' learning styles. This is particularly effective in the teaching of mathematics; teachers set precise objectives and ensure pupils of all abilities remain focused on what they are learning throughout the lesson. In comparison, the matching of tasks to pupils' abilities in English lessons is somewhat less sharp. Teachers are sometimes less precise about what pupils of different abilities need to learn and do not always ensure that pupils remain fully focused on the success criteria throughout the lesson. This is not always the case, however, and some English lessons show very rigorous use of assessment resulting in outstanding learning.

Recent action to improve the teaching of English, particularly writing, is having a positive impact. There is a strong approach to the systematic teaching of letter sounds and phonics in the Early Years Foundation Stage and effective promotion of early writing. Teachers give older pupils many good learning opportunities to develop necessary skills to compose, edit and improve their writing, including by using information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils apply these developing skills in promoting their learning across the curriculum. Year 2 pupils, for example, showed their understanding of adverbs and imperative verbs when evaluating and improving sets of instructions for making a sandwich. Strategies are giving pupils a good foundation to tackle longer and more structured writing. They show real enthusiasm for these tasks and their work shows increasingly high quality outcomes.

The school's actions to increase attention to pupils' speaking and listening skills and cooperation in lessons are also showing successes. Pupils listen carefully to teachers and others and they are keen to offer answers, thoughts and opinions. Pupils show increasingly effective personal and social skills, such as independence and self-esteem. The school gives pupils many well-judged opportunities to reflect on their learning and the wider world, effectively broadening their spiritual and cultural understanding. Teachers' consistent routines and organisation give pupils confidence and ensure little time is lost.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents, carers and pupils have highly positive views of pupils' behaviour and are very positive about their safety in school. Inspection evidence supports these views. Pupils' outstanding behaviour in lessons makes a marked contribution to the very positive learning ethos of the school. They work extremely well together and share resources very sensibly as staff successfully nurture collaboration from the Reception

class onwards. Pupils listen carefully to each other and understand the importance of respecting the views of others. Their attendance is high and they show good punctuality.

Pupils justifiably have high levels of confidence in the school's very effective systems to encourage and support good conduct. They value the effective systems to reward effort and conduct. The school provides very good support to those pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and successfully supports pupils who, in the past, have struggled to maintain appropriate behaviour elsewhere.

Pupils understand what constitutes safe and unsafe behaviour and what actions they can take to keep themselves safe. For example, they understand how to deal with risks associated with new technologies and social networking. They develop a keen moral code and show this through considerate behaviour and through challenging attitudes that they feel to be discriminatory. Pupils recognise different forms of bullying but say that it is not a concern because it happens so rarely and 'the teachers are always there to help'. Over time inappropriate conduct, including bullying, has been extremely rare and there are no recorded racist instances. Pupils' exemplary behaviour and attitudes throughout the inspection fully reflected this highly positive picture.

Leadership and management

The new headteacher has very clearly set out an ambitious vision for improvements within the school. He has successfully involved staff at all levels, building a strong and effective team with very clear shared values. As a result, staff and the governing body are working together well to enhance provision and to further raise levels of progress for all pupils. Effective action has begun to widen the management roles of coordinators and members of the governing body.

The curriculum is good. The school effectively establishes a broad range of activities for pupils of all abilities, meeting their needs and enabling them to make good progress. There are good opportunities for them to apply their developing skills in a wide range of contexts. For example, pupils write in an increasing variety of forms, frequently in response to learning in other subjects. There is good attention to a range of practical activities and pupils indicate their great enjoyment of the wide range of extra-curricular activities, especially sports. Good attention is paid to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with many good opportunities for pupils to reflect on the world around them and form their own views. Recent actions to promote greater speaking and listening skills are showing an impact here as pupils pay good respect to the opinions of others and discuss issues in a thoughtful manner. Leaders ensure that the school takes effective action to promote equality and tackle discrimination and fully meets all safeguarding requirements.

The headteacher's accurate self-evaluation has given a clear and appropriate agenda for improving approaches to teaching and accelerating progress, particularly in writing. Action taken has been rapid and supported by very effective training that is giving confidence to teachers to make changes. Teachers speak very positively of the ways they have been supported in re-evaluating their teaching and refining their work. Actions, for example, effective use of improved assessment systems, are

already showing a positive impact in lessons and pupils' outcomes. New approaches that focus on improving pupils' skills in working together and sharing ideas are also making an impact and are recognised by pupils themselves. The shared commitment and vision and the positive impact of the action already taken suggest that the school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its children well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the child's work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well children acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which children are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the children's attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Croft Primary School, Warrington, WA3 7DG

I would like to say 'thank you' to you all for making the inspectors so welcome when we came to your school and send special thanks to those of you who gave up time to talk to us about your work. You were sure that your school is good and getting even better at helping you to learn and we agree. You work hard, behave extremely well and get on very well together. Your attendance is high and you are right to be proud of what you achieve.

Yours is a good school. All the adults in school are extremely good at caring for you and they keep you very safe. Good teaching is giving you lots of interesting things to do. We saw how you really enjoy your lessons and how you are very keen to learn. As a result, you are making good progress although most of you have been doing a bit better in mathematics than you have in English. The headteacher and staff are working hard to improve things to help you learn better, especially in your writing, and this is successful.

One reason for our visit is to see if we can help your school to improve further. We have asked your teachers to make better use of what they know about how well you are doing to make sure that all parts of your English lessons help you all to learn at the very best rates.

I hope that you will help by continuing to do your very best in all you do.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Painter
Lead inspector

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