

North Crescent Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	115242
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	379046
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2012
Lead inspector	George Logan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pam Petts
Headteacher	Lisa Wright
Date of previous school inspection	28 April 2009
School address	North Crescent Wickford SS12 9AP
Telephone number	01268 765905
Fax number	01268 570234
Email address	admin@northcrescent.essex.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	8–9 February 2012
Inspection number	379046



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.

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 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 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

George Logan

Additional inspector

Sarah Beales

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent six hours visiting 13 lessons taught by eight different members of staff. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and with staff and two groups of pupils. 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 the school's documentation, which included records of teaching, the main improvement plan, records relating to safeguarding and extracts from the school's tracking of pupils' progress. A scrutiny of pupils' written work was also undertaken. The inspection team analysed 70 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, together with 29 questionnaires from staff and 99 from pupils.

Information about the school

North Crescent Primary School is an average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. While around one-twelfth of pupils speak English as an additional language, only a few of these are at an early stage of learning English. Around one-tenth of the pupils are Gypsy/Roma, with a very small number who are of Traveller heritage or from Showman's Guild families. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is broadly average, although the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is high for the size of the school. Some of these have complex physical or educational needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below average. The school does not meet the current floor standard. The school has gained a number of awards in recent years, including the Inclusion and Active Marks and National Healthy School status. The current headteacher took up her post in September 2009.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. However, decisive action by the new leadership team is ensuring that the school is steadily improving.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. Children's attainment on leaving Reception is particularly low in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress in Years 1 to 6, including their progress in reading, is typically satisfactory. With new staff, progress is beginning to accelerate, so providing a better foundation for learning in later years.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall and much good teaching was observed where pupils were challenged effectively and learned quickly. Systematic development of quality teaching is ensuring increasingly good learning across the school. Pupils' handwriting and the overall quality of their written work are, however, areas for improvement. Teachers' marking gives pupils clear guidance for improving their work in literacy but is less well-developed in the other subjects.
- Behaviour, safety and pupils' personal development are good in many respects. Provision for pupils' welfare is good. Pupils feel very safe and bullying is dealt with effectively. The school has well-established systems for managing pupils' behaviour. Records indicate that both incidents of poor behaviour and exclusions are rare. Overall, however, this aspect remains satisfactory as attendance, although much improved, is still a little below average.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has a clear direction, systems are well-embedded and staff are committed to sustaining the accelerating pace of learning. Key subject leadership is a strength. Governance is satisfactory. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve. The curriculum provides a broad learning experience which engages pupils' interest well.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the pace and consistency of pupils' learning across the school and raise their attainment by the end of Year 6, by:
 - sharper focus upon the different learning needs of pupils in mixed-year classes
 - setting higher expectations for the quality of pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their written work
 - ensuring that the existing strengths of teachers' marking in indicating the next steps in learning, currently evident in the marking of pupils' writing, are consistently applied across the other subjects.
- Ensure that teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is stimulating and engaging and that sufficient time and priority are given to developing children's skills in reading, writing and mathematics, so that they enter Year 1 with levels of attainment at least in line with those found nationally.
- Build upon the school's recent success in significantly increasing pupils' attendance, so that, where possible, termly school attendance targets are met.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers feel that their children make good progress. However, lesson observations indicated that pupils' achievement, though broadly satisfactory, is inconsistent. Children's skills on entry to Reception are below age-related expectations. While they make rapid progress in their personal and social development because of the nurturing ethos, overall progress is only satisfactory. Despite accurate assessment, teaching is not always sufficiently focused on extending children's skills in reading, writing and mathematics, so that outcomes in these aspects are relatively low. There are missed opportunities to extend learning through challenging interactions with adults and more effective development of key literacy and numeracy through child-initiated activities. In consequence, children typically enter Year 1 with relatively low literacy and numeracy skills. Despite more intensive teaching in Years 1 and 2, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 typically remains below average representing satisfactory progress. Too few pupils attain the higher Level 3. Currently, more effective teaching and better embedding of reading skills have begun to accelerate pupils' learning.

Progress in Years 3 to 6 is also satisfactory. Attainment by the end of Year 6, although lower recently than in 2010, is broadly average. Progress and attainment in reading is generally stronger than in writing. Occasionally, there could be more awareness of the different learning needs of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils in the mixed Year 5 and 6 classes. Effective deployment of recently-appointed teachers is ensuring

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

that teaching is more motivating and is beginning to drive the accelerated progress necessary to raise attainment further. Several lessons observed were characterised by a relatively brisk pace, although some introductions are still over-long. That said, rigorous tracking, higher expectations, greater accountability of staff and a stronger focus on learning are having a positive impact. Progress in reading is increasingly secure, with focused sessions to promote pupils' knowledge of phonics (the linking of letters and sounds) and to develop their reading skills.

Satisfactory provision to meet the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs ensures that these pupils mostly make satisfactory progress, although with some variability. Pupils who speak English as an additional language, and those from minority ethnic groups, also make mostly satisfactory progress. The progress and attainment of Gypsy/Roma pupils generally reflects the length of time they have been in the school and the frequency of their attendance. In general, those who have been in the school for an extended time, and attend frequently, attain as well as other pupils.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers, and pupils, feel that the quality of teaching is good. However, inspectors found that, while much teaching seen was indeed good, the impact of teaching over time has been erratic, resulting in progress which, though improving, has been no better than satisfactory. Teachers promote pupils' social, moral and cultural development well. Across the school, the teaching of reading is generally effective. The increased emphasis on the teaching of phonics is supported by a good range of activities accurately matched to individual needs. Elsewhere, teaching has not always provided sufficient challenge to increase the pace of progress. Despite many improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including a much improved environment and well-embedded support for children's personal and social development, the emphasis on the core skills of reading, writing and mathematics has been inconsistent, so that progress in these areas has been slower. There are missed opportunities to engage directly with children, and to extend their learning, on a one-to-one basis. Elsewhere, an increased focus on pupils' learning, and more challenging teaching, are together driving more rapid progress. For example, in a well-paced, effective Year 6 mathematics lesson, the motivating presentation, good subject knowledge and enthusiasm of the teacher and good opportunities for pupils to engage in practical tasks, together ensured that progress and achievement were good. However, in a number of lessons, slower pace and over-extended whole-class sessions tended to slow the pace of learning. There are missed opportunities to extend the challenge for more-able pupils.

Across the school, progress in implementing a range of assessment strategies, including self-assessment by pupils and the use of individual targets, has been good, although their impact on pupils' learning remains inconsistent. The marking of pupils' work in literacy mostly identifies the next steps they need to make in their learning. This approach is not so evident elsewhere. Insufficient priority has been given to improving pupils' handwriting, so that written work and presentation are sometimes

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

untidy. Overall, the curriculum is beginning to support better progress in pupils' core skills. Recent development work has enhanced the range of learning opportunities in the wider curriculum.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents, carers and pupils rightly recognise the positive relationships and good quality of care in the school. This is a happy, cohesive community. Close, positive relationships between adults and pupils, and the good range of extra-curricular activities, engage pupils well and underpin the positive community spirit. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is, for almost all pupils, good. Pupils, and most parents and carers, have few concerns about behaviour. Indeed, almost all pupils say that they feel very safe, and virtually all parents and carers also feel that their children are safe in school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage behave well and conduct themselves safely both indoors and in the outdoor area. Pupils have a good understanding of risk and understand, for example, the purpose of the school's efforts to keep them safe when using the internet. There are clear procedures for managing pupils' behaviour and these are effective because there are very few recorded incidents and little evidence of inappropriate behaviour. Although the ethos of the school is very inclusive, providing, as expected, for pupils with a wide range of needs, including a small number with behavioural difficulties, exclusions are rare. There are few reports of bullying of any type. Good procedures are now in place to manage any issues that arise. Despite the many strengths in behaviour and safety, this aspect remains satisfactory overall, because attendance is below average. The school has been very successfully in tackling a heritage, over many years, of very low attendance. This has incrementally improved over the last three years. However, while attendance is now close to the expected level, both attendance and punctuality remain key priorities for the school.

Leadership and management

School leaders are effective in supporting the personal development and well-being of pupils and this is rightly recognised by parents and carers. Senior leaders and the governing body ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective. The school is active in tackling discrimination and is genuinely committed to promoting equality. Since her appointment, the headteacher has established a robust leadership structure, to improve provision and drive more rapid progress. She is effectively supported by the deputy headteacher and ambitious subject leaders at middle management level. There is a clear, shared vision for further improvement. A robust tracking system and rigorous data analysis facilitate close monitoring of pupils' progress. This has resulted, for example, in accelerated progress in reading in Years 4 and 5. Arrangements for the support of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have been overhauled, with higher levels of staff accountability. Well-judged recent appointments and effective monitoring and support of teaching and learning ensure that the proportion of good or better teaching is rising steadily. While outcomes remain weaker in some respects, key inadequacies in Early Years Foundation Stage provision have been largely addressed. Considerable inroads have

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

been made on the school's legacy of very low attendance so that it is now close to the expected level. Provision for the support of Gypsy/Roma pupils, and the considerable efforts made to meet their needs, is a significant strength.

The school, through its good extra-curricular programme and its commitment to the individual, is effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' awareness of cultural diversity is promoted well through the curriculum and also by active links with a school in The Gambia. Staff now feel more ownership of the curriculum, which, though still satisfactory in the support that it gives for enhancing pupils' basic skills, provides a generally effective framework within which to drive standards up. Good opportunities are identified for the development of writing through other subjects.

School self-evaluation indicates that school leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths, and of what still needs to be done and there is a strong impetus for change across the school. Capacity for improvement is securely satisfactory. The governing body has a realistic view of the school's strengths and context and actively supports the school's work. Governors recognise that there is still work to be done to secure the quality of provision and outcomes.

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 pupils 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 pupils' 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 pupils 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 pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' 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.

13 February 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of North Crescent Primary School, Wickford, SS12 9AP

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, spending time in lessons and hearing your views. Thank you to those who completed our questionnaire. We found that yours is a satisfactory school and it is improving steadily. Our main findings are listed below.

- You generally make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6 but your progress is inconsistent across the school.
- While provision in Reception has improved, children do not have high enough skills in reading, writing and mathematics before they enter Year 1. This affects their progress later on.
- Teaching has improved and is often good. While you learn well in many lessons, the pace is occasionally rather slow. Your handwriting and written work does not always show attention to quality. Marking in subjects other than literacy does not always give you enough guidance on how to improve.
- You have positive views about school, have good attitudes to learning and behave well. However, your attendance, while improved, is still below average.
- Senior leaders are really helping the school to move forward. They are keen to ensure that your academic progress is more rapid. The curriculum offers you many interesting activities.

To help you to do better, we have asked the school to:

- ensure that teachers help you to learn more consistently and rapidly across the school, through higher expectations of your handwriting and presentation
- ensure that children have better skills in reading, writing and mathematics before they leave Reception
- build upon the recent success in raising your attendance levels.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Logan
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', 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.**