

Crackley Bank Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	124108
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	380806
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2012
Lead inspector	Ian Jones

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caron Robinson
Headteacher	Sara Stevenson
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2008
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Age group	3-11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Ian Jones

Additional inspector

Richard Boswell

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 10 lessons; two of these in partnership with the headteacher. In total, seven teachers were observed. The inspectors heard pupils read and spoke with them about their reading. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and representatives of the governing body including the Chair of the Governing Body. Planning documents and school tracking data were analysed. The 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: documents concerning safeguarding and child protection; the current school improvement plan; records of teaching observations; minutes of the governing body; and the reports written by the school's external adviser. Inspectors analysed questionnaire responses from 16 parents and carers and those completed by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Most of the pupils at this smaller than average primary school are from White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high at 53%. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average; it is high in some year groups. The proportion of pupils who join or leave during the school year is above average. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery and a Reception class. There are seven classes in total, with two mixed-age classes for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5. There have been significant changes in teaching staff since the previous inspection. The school runs a daily breakfast club. This is managed by the governing body. The school meets the current floor (minimum) standards for attainment set by the government.

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	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school which has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The headteacher and senior leaders have been a determined driving force in improving the quality of teaching and learning. They recognise the need to improve the quality of teaching further in order to accelerate learning, especially where there have been previous pockets of underachievement.
- Together with the effective support of governors, senior leaders have built a dedicated team of staff who are purposefully and successfully focused on raising standards. Assessments are regular and effective, and stimulating teaching is linked to the well-adapted curriculum. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Pupils with special needs are effectively supported through a well developed programme. All groups of pupils, regardless of their starting points, achieve well in English and mathematics. They make good use of their key literacy and mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Lessons are engaging and regularly provide valuable experiences and interesting challenges. The staff have high expectations of themselves and their pupils. They engage well learners of all abilities and aptitudes, and this generates positive attitudes to learning. Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning and are proud of their achievements.
- Leadership and management are widely shared and focused well on evaluating the work of the school accurately and managing performance. As a result, the priorities in the development plan focus rightly on the most important areas for improvement for the school.
- Pupils behave well around the school and in the playground. They are eager to help each other and collaborate well. Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors.
- While parents and carers express confidence in the school, leaders and

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managers recognise the need to engage further with a significant minority and develop regular communication of them.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - sharing methods and approaches by continuing to model the best teaching that exists with all school staff
 - providing more detailed guidance for pupils as to the next steps in their learning

- Improve engagement with parents and carers by:
 - increasing the quality and frequency of helpful information offered in order to enlist their support
 - developing communication with those who are hard to reach.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most children join the Nursery class with skill levels well below those expected for their age. Children settle quickly and happily in the warm, friendly atmosphere and slowly but surely develop an eagerness to learn. This is because of the high-quality relationships the children enjoy with adults. Parents and carers accurately hold the view that their children are achieving well.

The Early Years Foundation Stage supports learning well by providing a rich range of high-quality activities. The outside areas for the Reception and Nursery classes provide a stimulating environment to promote learning across the curriculum. The good balance and variety of the range of activities offered in the Early Years Foundation Stage challenges children's thinking and promotes active learning. This helps to ensure good progress. Pupils join Year 1 with emerging strengths in their personal and social development; however, their skills in numeracy and communication, language and literacy remain below those expected. Pupils make good progress in mathematics, reading and writing during Key Stage 1. This good progress continues throughout the school. Despite this, standards of reading remain below average on entry to Key Stage 2.

A system to track progress over time was established in 2009. It identified some significant underachievement in the past which has hampered progress for some pupils. While attainment at Year 6 remains below average, including in reading, standards are rising quickly across the school so that, in some year groups, attainment is in line with and sometimes above the average. This is due to effective support which is accelerating learning at a faster than average rate for these pupils.

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Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs progress well due to the work in the intervention and other classes which is carefully tailored to their needs.

Positive action to increase the richness of learning experiences is boosting achievement and increasing pupils' enjoyment of their lessons, especially in mathematics and writing. In lessons, pupils listen attentively and play a full part in learning. For example, pupils of all ages eagerly anticipate the challenges awaiting them in their daily mathematics lessons and this establishes a positive work ethic which is maintained throughout the lesson. The school is very successful in promoting an interest in reading and in books. Pupils read with increasing accuracy and expression as they progress through the school. Those who struggle with new or unfamiliar words increasingly understand how to use their growing knowledge of letter sounds to help them read.

Quality of teaching

Pupils achieve well over time as a result of good, and sometimes, outstanding teaching. This was evident in lessons and in the scrutiny of pupils' work. Any weak teaching present at the last inspection has been eradicated and teaching is now consistently good across the school. Pupils are well motivated to learn and the staff team share high expectations for what can be achieved.

Learning is well matched to pupils' needs. This is a key factor in the good rates of progress made by different groups of pupils, including those working in mixed-age classes. The regular use of assessment procedures during lessons enables teachers to make adjustments to ensure learning remains purposeful. The school's marking policy is well understood by all pupils. Teachers provide regular feedback through responses in books, which, in the best examples, provide guidance as to the next steps to take in their learning, to which pupils eagerly respond. Although pupils are encouraged to assess their own work, indicating how well they have understood the learning objective, the response from teachers sometimes lacks helpful detail in suggesting what action the pupil needs to take to rectify matters.

Pupils develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well, and inspectors found notable strengths in many of the activities observed. For example, in an assembly, pupils responded excellently when asked to reflect on how they would persevere with tasks in their lessons and thus reflect the school's values of care, belief, pride and success. Typically, activities are carefully designed to stimulate learning and this helps to maintain pupils' attention. The planned curriculum takes account of the interests of the pupils and covers all subjects in a creative manner. For example, pupils in Year 6 enthusiastically collaborated on a project to calculate the cost of maintaining animals at a zoo. They embraced their tasks with gusto, prioritising what they needed to spend and calculating the exact money needed. The project will conclude with a visit to the zoo, designed to stimulate enjoyment and bring their learning to life!

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The contribution made by intervention lessons is significant in supporting those pupils who have fallen behind or who have special educational needs. Teaching assistants promote pupils' learning with complementary explanations, while avoiding over-directing pupils. Classrooms are bright and inviting, with displays that prompt learning and encourage pupils to think about their learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning and respond enthusiastically to the tasks presented in lessons; this contributes significantly to their achievement. The large majority concentrate fully and help each other to learn well, for example in group tasks. Cooperative work begins in the Nursery and is developed through the school. The carefully constructed behaviour policy is regularly reviewed and contributions from pupils are taken into account. It is consistently applied across the school, with the result that pupils understand what is expected of them and they respond well to merits and praise for good behaviour. As pupils progress through the school, they are successfully encouraged to set high standards for themselves. They respond well to expectations, as reflected by the rarity of fixed-term exclusions.

Pupils make good use of opportunities to contribute to school life; for example, older pupils enjoy the responsibility of helping to play with and care for the younger children at lunchtimes. Parents and carers are unanimous in their views, as expressed in the responses to the questionnaire, that their children are safe and well looked after in school. Pupils say that there is hardly any bullying, with no homophobic or racist intent. They add that pupils behave well and act safely almost all of the time; parents and carers hold similar views. Pupils acquire a good understanding of matters that might endanger their personal safety through the curriculum. This includes sessions addressing such matters as anti-bullying awareness, domestic violence awareness sessions, and internet safety workshops among others. Pupils' sense of security and enjoyment of school are reflected in their above average attendance.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides motivational leadership and she enjoys the unanimous support of her colleagues; she is skilled and committed and provides clear direction and ambition for the school. The staff and governors share her high ambitions for the school and there is a realistic appraisal of its strengths and weaknesses. A key strength is the close team work and cooperation of the staff fostered by senior leaders. This had led to a rise in staff morale with colleagues eager and able to take on responsibility. In addition, high-quality professional staff development has impacted positively on pupils' learning in the classroom.

The effective management of teaching and learning, through close and accurate monitoring, helps staff to enhance their skills. This has brought improvement to the consistency of good teaching across the school, although the proportion of outstanding teaching is not as high as it could be. Staff enthusiastically embrace

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suggestions for improvement and put into practice new methods learned through training. For example, initiatives to improve standards of writing and mental mathematics are being effectively delivered across the school. The way that the school cares for all groups and closely monitors their progress indicates how seriously leaders at all levels promote equality and tackle discrimination.

The school enjoys the confidence of many parents and carers, who are very positive about the school. 'Stay and Play' sessions and other activities help to promote good relations with the parents. Nevertheless, the school has identified the need to foster closer relationships with some parents and carers in order to engage them in the life and work of the school and to assist children with their learning.

The curriculum is well managed and meets pupils' needs well. A new emphasis on developing creativity exists and pupils benefit from stimulating opportunities in art and music to extend their cultural horizons. Their understanding of different communities in the United Kingdom is sound.

The governing body is rigorous in holding the school to account for the outcomes achieved by pupils. They know the school and the community it serves well and contribute to effective arrangements for safeguarding. These meet current requirements with recommended good practice adopted.

Strong leadership at all levels has brought about significant improvement since the school was last inspected. Consequently, achievement across the school is improving quickly and securely, demonstrating that the school has a good capacity 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 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.



1 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Crackley Bank Primary School, Newcastle, ST5 7BE

Thank you very much for being so welcoming and friendly when Mr. Boswell and I visited your school recently. I understand why you and your parents and carers value the school so highly. I hope that you will look after all the new born chicks carefully, especially the ones you named after us!

Crackley Bank is a good school, which has a number of strengths. Here are some the many good things I found:

- You behave well, work hard and take pride in your achievements.
- Your teachers work hard to plan interesting ways for you to learn.
- You make good progress in your learning and achieve well because the teaching you receive is good.
- Your teachers work well as a team to meet your needs including those who need extra help to learn.
- The headteacher governors and senior staff lead the school well and have made good improvements.

In order to make the school even better, I have asked the school to do a few things:

- Work even more closely with your parents and carers to help them know more about your work.
- Give you opportunities to help you prepare for the future.
- Help your teachers to only give you the very best lessons so that you can make even better progress.

I hope you will carry on learning and working hard to make your school even better and I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Jones
Lead inspector

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