

Cressing Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114832
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	378936
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Kath Beck

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	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Edwards
Headteacher	Stewart Caplen
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Nine lessons taught by six teachers were observed. Meetings were held with parents, carers, groups of pupils, staff and representatives of the governing body. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school's data and analysis of pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for safeguarding pupils, minutes of governing body meetings and development plans. In addition, inspectors looked at reports from the School Improvement Partner and local authority, pupils' work, records of pupils' progress, attendance records and the responses to questionnaires completed by staff, pupils and from 50 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effective are members of the new leadership team in working together to implement and achieve challenging targets for improvement?
- How well are staff using assessment to set demanding work for all groups of pupils?
- What measures has the school taken to improve pupils' progress in mathematics?

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school. The majority of pupils come from the immediate locality, surrounding villages and nearby town of Braintree. Most pupils come from White British families. Some come from Romany, Gypsy, Traveller or other White backgrounds. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. One fifth of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is a similar proportion to that found in other schools nationally. Pupils' needs include learning, behavioural, emotional, and speech and language difficulties. Pupils from Reception to Year 4 are taught in single age classes. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are taught in the same class.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Crossing Primary is a good school. In 2009 standards declined steeply and were significantly below average that year. The highly skilled senior leadership team, established in January 2010, took determined action to improve the rate at which pupils learn and raise standards across the school. This has been very successful as pupils have made good and in some cases outstanding progress in English and mathematics. In 2011, outcomes for children at the age of five continued their rise and were above the national average. Standards at the end of Year 2 were broadly average while those at the end of Year 6 were above average.

To bring about rapid improvement, senior leaders and staff set extremely ambitious targets and became resolute about reaching them. An excellent, straightforward, sharply-focused assessment system was implemented across all classes. Staff analyse pupils' levels of attainment in English and mathematics thoroughly in set pieces of work. Pupils receive very clear feedback, orally and in writing, about what they do well and the skills they need to apply or demonstrate in order to achieve the next level of attainment. As a result, staff know pupils' abilities well and this underpins their plans to provide demanding work for different ability groups and meet individual needs. In turn pupils are strongly motivated, understand exactly what they are striving to achieve and have an 'I know I can do it' approach.

Senior leaders took highly effective steps in collaboration with staff to review and improve the quality of their teaching, raising their expectations and sharpening their awareness of their impact on pupils' learning. All teaching in English and mathematics observed during the inspection was either good or outstanding. In English staff take great care to develop pupils' skills in the use of grammar, spelling and punctuation. Pupils' books show that they do not develop consistently a fluent joined script or write at length very often. A new programme to support learning and teaching in mathematics has been introduced and is contributing notably to the rise in standards. It includes a wide range of practical activities and games to make learning purposeful, appropriate to everyday life, and fun. Information and communication technology (ICT) also motivates pupils to do well in mathematics.

Pupils' outstanding behaviour and contribution to the school community ensure that there is a harmonious, friendly atmosphere that contributes significantly to their learning. One parent wrote, 'The school has a positive learning environment and a great community feeling'; another, 'All children, whatever their background, are welcome here.' Others are very appreciative of the changes made, saying the 'school

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is improving beyond my expectations'. Pupils take pride in looking after their newly decorated classrooms. Pupils' progress in Year 2 has increased now that they are taught in a classroom, rather than the dining hall, where learning was often interrupted. The curriculum enables pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills successfully across a range of subjects. However, the use of unchallenging worksheets, especially in geography, history and religious education in some classes, limits opportunities for pupils to be independent and express their imaginative ideas across a wider range of subjects.

Senior leaders monitor and evaluate the school's effectiveness rigorously. Their ambition and drive in the pursuit of excellence is shared with all involved in the school. The exceptional improvements in key aspects of the school's development mean the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English further by:
 - improving the development of pupils' handwriting so that as they move through the school they learn to write neatly and fluently with a joined script:
 - giving pupils opportunities to write at length.
- Provide pupils with more opportunities to become independent and resourceful so that they can think of original ways to express their imaginative ideas across the curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Overall outcomes for pupils are good. Pupils' starting points vary each year, but generally they are below those usually found. Good teaching and individualised support are enabling pupils to build up essential numeracy and literacy skills well, although the lack of a consistent joined script holds back the amount of writing pupils complete in lessons. Pupils respond well to the demands placed on them. In a high quality mathematics lesson, Year 2 pupils were challenged to use a wide range of resources and activities to add three numbers to make 10 or 20. More-able pupils applied this knowledge to money problems. They gave their tasks their full concentration, helping each other, and responding enthusiastically to interactions with staff.

The performance of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, Romany, Gypsy, Traveller or other White backgrounds is better than that of similar groups found nationally. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons as tasks capture their interest and meet their precise needs. Short, sharply-

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focused one-to-one sessions motivate them to do their best to gain secure knowledge, for example of the sounds letters make. Pupils enjoy being at school and most attend regularly.

Pupils are consistently thoughtful and caring towards each other. At breaktime during the inspection, a pupil accidentally dropped his snack on the playground while running to join his friends. Another pupil who saw the incident instantly offered their own snack so that there was no unhappiness. This high quality behaviour, together with play leaders, librarians, house captains, school council members and 'Funky Fruit Tuck Shop' shop-keepers, makes a significant contribution to the school community. Pupils decide how the profit from the shop is to be spent and recently chose to purchase play equipment for breaktimes. In the local community pupils contributed to the design of a new local play area, and met with Parish Council representatives to discuss problems with regard to litter in the village. They take part in village events and led a 'One World Day' as part of a transition project for secondary school. These activities provide pupils with important knowledge and skills that prepare them well for the next stage in their education.

Pupils feel safe and are confident that they can speak to any adult if they have a concern. The recent increase in the number of pupils participating in a range of sports has enhanced their knowledge of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Pupils engage very well with those from different backgrounds. Since the last inspection they have gained greater understanding of other faiths and cultures in the United Kingdom. Studies of countries such as France and China have extended their knowledge of the wider world.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers motivate pupils to want to learn, and capture their enthusiasm for learning by including a varied range of activities in lessons. They draw on their thorough assessments to provide work that challenges pupils to do even better. Mathematics lessons often include quick-fire questions, games, group work and ICT so that pupils acquire and apply new skills rapidly. In other subjects, teachers set pupils to work quickly after using short films, drama, and practical experiences, such as living as a Victorian for a day, to stimulate ideas. Pupils share these with their friends in order to think them through before writing them down. That said there are occasions in other subjects when staff do not enable pupils to use their initiative and resourcefulness to make the most of their learning. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively to support pupils of all abilities. Marking and feedback to pupils in lessons are of high quality and move learning along at a good rate.

The curriculum is organised well and includes a broad range of practical experiences that meet pupils’ needs. It is enriched by events arranged with other schools and in the locality to enhance their personal development. A residential trip contributes significantly to pupils’ understanding of social living away from home. Visitors to the school, visits out and after school-clubs that include cookery and sport add much to pupils’ enjoyment of learning.

Care, guidance and support are one of the school’s strengths. Staff work effectively with a range of professionals to better meet the needs of pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. The school promotes attendance well, and works effectively with families to reduce absence rates. A termly report to parents and carers about their child’s progress enables them to provide further support at home.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, governors and staff are inspired by a strong clear purpose to enable pupils to reach the highly ambitious targets set for them. Morale is very high among all involved with the school as they see the success of recent developments in rapidly rising standards. Data are analysed sharply to judge the school’s effectiveness

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and identify areas for further improvement. Extremely effective strategies have raised the quality of teaching so that pupils are now making consistently good or exceptional progress.

The effectiveness of the governing body is good. It has a thorough understanding of the school and uses its expertise, especially in finance, buildings and education to provide support and challenge as well as to evaluate the quality of the school’s provision. Safeguarding rightly has high priority. Arrangements are checked frequently for their effectiveness. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding and child protection meets frequently with the headteacher. This is to check that the risks are minimised, especially for children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Training for representatives of the governing body and staff is up-to-date. The governing body supports fully the important role the school plays within the community enhancing significantly community cohesion. Close links have been established with a school in London, but pupils’ links with global communities are still developing.

The school is successful in promoting equal opportunities strongly and raising the achievement and performance of different groups of pupils. Parents and carers are fully supportive and appreciative of the way their views are considered and addressed. Partnerships with local schools, professionals and specialist services have brought about an exchange of expertise that is improving outcomes for all pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enjoy a good range of challenging activities indoors and outside that meet their interests. Their enthusiasm is captured effectively and directed into developing

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good levels of achievement. Activities such as watching and touching blocks of ice frozen into different shapes that reveal a range of plastic animals as they thaw, capture children’s curiosity and enhance their knowledge and understanding of the world. Outside, children enjoy riding their wheeled toys on a track acting out visits to a ‘drive through restaurant’. This does much to enhance their physical development as well as their communication skills. Children’s excellent behaviour enables adults to work with small groups, assessing their progress or helping them to count, or recognise the sounds letters make uninterrupted. Children remain engaged in their chosen activities for extended periods of time, playing alone or joining in with their friends. However, opportunities are missed, especially at ‘snack time’ to enable children to be independent and use their initiative.

Good leadership and management have led to a rise in the number of children reaching or exceeding the national average in recent years. High quality arrangements to assess and track children’s progress are used successfully to match activities to their differing needs. Photographs taken to confirm children’s achievements during the year are shared with parents and carers who gain a full understanding of their child’s progress. Early analysis of children’s needs this term indicates that there are more children starting school who do not speak as confidently as they might. Planning is being adapted to provide more opportunities for them to engage with adults in activities that enhance their communication skills.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A slightly above average number of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. All those responding were fully supportive of the school and written comments were full of praise. Parents and carers referred to their high regard for the headteacher and staff, the strong community feeling within the school and high standards of behaviour of the children. They also praised the enthusiasm for learning created by good teaching and improvements to the school over the past two years, especially with regard to safety of the children. Inspection evidence endorses these positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cressing Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 141 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	78	11	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	86	7	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	27	54	23	46	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	62	19	38	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	37	74	13	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	37	74	13	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	68	16	32	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	27	54	22	44	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	37	74	13	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	64	17	34	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	52	23	46	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	41	82	9	18	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	41	82	9	18	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



28 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cressing Primary School, Braintree, CM77 8JE

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. You told us that you are very happy at school and that everyone is really kind to one another. We noticed that too because when one of you dropped your snack on the ground at playtime another child immediately offered theirs instead, which stopped any feelings of unhappiness. We enjoyed hearing about your trip to Norfolk where many of you grew in confidence to try new things.

You said that you liked the changes that have taken place at your school recently. You are working hard to do as well as you can in English and mathematics. You told us how much you like the assessment books, because they help you to know exactly how well you are doing and what you need to do to achieve even better. You like the comments from the teachers and the way you have time to correct the things you got wrong, so you can get them right next time. Your exemplary behaviour, the way you listen to your teachers and the respect you have for them are also helping you to learn a great deal.

You go to a good school, but the headteacher, governing body and staff want to make it even better. Everyone in school already plays an important role in helping to make it successful and the things we have asked the grown-ups to do require a really good response from you. We know you will help when the grown-ups do the following things.

- We have asked your teachers to show you how to improve your handwriting so that you can join your letters and write neatly and quickly.
- We have also asked them to give you the chance to write longer pieces of work.
- We have asked them to provide you with more chances to get more actively involved in your learning so that you can think of original ways to express your imaginative ideas across the curriculum.

Yours sincerely

Kath Beck
Lead inspector

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