

Croft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122463
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	380478
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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	352
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Steve Carroll
Headteacher	Lizzie Blount
Date of previous school inspection	5 May 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who observed 12 teachers in 21 lessons. They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, with a group of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at information relating to the achievement of all groups of pupils through the school, and a wide range of policies and plans, including the school improvement plan. They analysed staff and pupil inspection questionnaires and the 131 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- The effectiveness of mathematics teaching in promoting improvement in the achievement of all groups of pupils.
- The impact of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage in laying solid foundations in pupils' communication, language and literacy and in their development of mathematics skills.
- The capacity of leaders and managers to move the school forward and to sustain improvements.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average school compared to others of its type. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A well-above average proportion has special educational needs and/or disabilities, with the large majority having moderate learning difficulties.

The school, which is part of the Sutton Centre Cluster of schools, has achieved the Healthy Schools Gold Award and the Eco-Bronze Award. It has Investors in People accreditation. It was part of the local authority's Improving Schools Programme from 2007 to 2009 in its drive to improve standards. Specific support was put in place in September 2011, following disappointing results in the Key Stage 2 national tests.

The headteacher took up her post in September 2009. There has been some instability of staffing in the recent past.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

The school's effectiveness has declined since the last inspection. Despite children making satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, their learning and progress slow through the school and are inadequate. For the last five years, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 has been significantly below that expected and the gap between the school's results and those attained nationally is not narrowing sufficiently. Attainment at the end of Year 6 in mathematics is low and in English it is below average. Pupils' achievement is inadequate because most groups of pupils do not make the progress expected of them from their average levels of skills and knowledge on entry to the school. The curriculum is inadequate as it is not planned carefully enough to enable pupils to move forward sufficiently in their learning. The school's promotion of equality of opportunity, to enable pupils to achieve as well as they can, is inadequate, as is their preparation for secondary school because basic skills are poorly developed. The school is not providing an adequate quality of education for its pupils or satisfactory value for money.

While the school's tracking points to an improving picture, it is not reflected in inspection evidence. Although teaching observed during the inspection was largely satisfactory, with some that was inadequate, it is not good enough to enable pupils to make up lost ground which leads to their inadequate progress over time. Gaps in learning from previous years, aggravated by staff absences, compound the situation. Data about pupils are not used carefully enough in planning tasks that provide them with an accurate level of challenge. This is equally true in mathematics and English. Mathematics has only very recently become a major improvement focus and methods of teaching concepts and mathematical language are not secure. While the Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes are satisfactory, and literacy and numeracy skills are integral to every activity, children's progress in communication, literacy and numbers is not as quick as that in other areas. Throughout the school, insufficient use is made of targets to point pupils towards their learning goals and enable them to manage their own learning. While some excellent marking was seen, as with all other aspects of teaching, there is inconsistency and this includes in the quality of information and guidance given to pupils.

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The school does not demonstrate the capacity for sustained improvement. The headteacher's accurate understanding of the school's issues, through detailed monitoring and evaluation, particularly of teaching and learning, has not led to the necessary gains in pupils' learning. She has too many roles because senior leaders are not deployed appropriately overall to support her and to ensure the necessary focus on the school's priorities. The actions of subject leaders have not had the necessary impact on raising achievement. The governing body, while caring greatly about the school, is not challenging its performance as they should. Governors are not able to help it to move forward because they do not have enough knowledge to do so. Consequently, leadership and management are inadequate.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. A good aspect is the enthusiasm of many to adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils enjoy contributing to their school, including fund-raising for charities. The headteacher and her staff have worked effectively to strengthen and broaden relationships between home and school, and have won the confidence of most parents and carers. Pupils are supported and guided satisfactorily, with the care for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable in particular, leading to their greater confidence and self-esteem.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress through the school, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that the teaching is consistently good, based on:
 - using information about the levels at which pupils are working to provide activities that match closely to their abilities and provide a good level of challenge
 - setting targets in literacy and numeracy which are known and understood by pupils and of which they have ownership
 - marking that informs pupils regularly of their achievements and the next steps in learning.

- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management across the school and provide support for the headteacher in her drive to raise attainment levels, by making sure that:
 - senior leaders have roles, responsibilities and accountability for moving the school forward in key aspects of school improvement, including the quality of teaching and learning and the use of assessment
 - middle leaders have greater impact on improving the outcomes in subjects for which they are responsible
 - the governing body monitors and evaluates the school's performance comprehensively so that it can challenge the school and influence its direction.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Too many pupils do not master number skills adequately to make the necessary progress that is expected for their age, and are unable to apply these skills satisfactorily. In some classes, pupils produce little work in either English or mathematics. Their work is sometimes poorly presented and not commented on by teachers. Pupils’ extended writing shows that more complex sentence skills are being promoted, although inconsistencies remain in the quality of pupils’ sentence construction, spelling and use of punctuation. Younger pupils are building up their knowledge of letters and sounds, resulting in their growing confidence in language and communication, although they make slower progress in numeracy. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as with other groups of pupils, is inadequate over time. One-to-one support does not always focus on the learning goals in pupils’ individual education plans. The development of skills, such as putting a finger space between words, is not consistently encouraged. The learning and progress of the very small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is not significantly different from other groups. Pupils in all year groups who are capable of reaching higher levels are not developing quickly enough their skills of application or their capacity for critical thinking.

Pupils say that they usually feel safe in and around the school and show a satisfactory understanding of how to stay safe in a range of situations in their daily lives. Pupils develop team work and decision-making skills through a range of responsibilities, such as involvement in the school council and Eco council. They show a good understanding of the importance of healthy minds and bodies, reflecting their Healthy Schools award, and are able to explain why it is important to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Pupils participate eagerly in a wide range of sporting activities and a third choose the school’s nutritious lunches. Pupils’ packed lunches include a fairly healthy range of foods. Overall, pupils’ show satisfactory social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. They increasingly take the feelings and concerns of others into account and are developing their understanding of the different beliefs and lifestyles of others. Pupils’ attendance is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3

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

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers make the purpose of lessons clear and there is often, but not always, a quick pace. Pupils are keen to do well and show positive attitudes towards staff and learning. The information that the school has about the levels pupils are working at is not, however, used carefully enough by teachers to plan activities that will meet accurately their individual needs. Sometimes, the intended outcomes for pupils are the same for all abilities represented in the lesson. In addition, there is an over-dependence on work sheets which also take too little account of the pupils' needs. This results in work being too hard or too easy, and in pupils' inadequate progress. Where pupils have targets, the use of these in driving improvement is variable. Similarly, the school's marking policy is not consistently adhered to. Although some teaching assistants support learning effectively, others do not help to focus pupils on the intended learning outcomes.

Themes are generally carefully chosen and provide an enjoyable stimulus on which to base learning, including practising literacy skills and enterprise activities. The curriculum also promotes pupils' personal development satisfactorily. A good range of popular after-school activities, such as the art club and the recorder club, promote a range of inter-personal skills and enable pupils to discover new interests. However, the school's curriculum provision is inadequate overall because it does not build on what pupils know systematically enough, resulting in inadequate progress in English and mathematics throughout both key stages. Planning for pupils' individual needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is not precise enough to meet their learning needs. Partnerships with other schools and organisations, particularly for sport, extend the range of activities that pupils experience. Overall, provision for physical education has been improved since the last inspection.

The popular breakfast club and after-school club provide a nutritious and sociable start and end to the day's learning. Staff work together well as a team to ensure that pupils' worries and concerns are addressed promptly, particularly for those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. However, while attendance is monitored and good attendance is rewarded, it has remained just in line with the national average for the last three years. The school's provision is strengthened by its good links with external agencies, which provide specialist support when necessary.

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Generally, carefully planned arrangements to prepare pupils for their next class and for secondary school are in place, with individual plans prepared for those with specific issues and needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The strategies put in place by the headteacher to raise attainment have been ineffective, despite her drive and ambition. The quality of teaching remains too variable to raise achievement sufficiently over time. Long-term and short, unplanned staff absences have disrupted pupils’ learning and hampered their progress, particularly in some year groups. The instability of staffing in recent years and the deployment of teachers to different year groups, to ensure their optimum effectiveness, has further aggravated the situation. Equality of opportunity is inadequate, because too many pupils do not make the progress that they should.

The headteacher has too much to do. While the senior team has specific responsibilities, members are not sufficiently involved in strategic planning to support the headteacher’s endeavours. Middle leaders are very committed and monitor the aspects for which they have responsibility but have not ensured that data are used accurately in planning of learning. The governing body oversees safeguarding arrangements satisfactorily. However, its effectiveness in supporting and challenging the school is inadequate because it relies too much on the information given by the headteacher about the major issues facing the school.

The headteacher has been proactive in seeking and responding to the concerns of parents and carers. As a result, relationships between home and school are very positive and include regular communication and consultation. Opportunities for parents and carers to be involved in supporting their children’s learning are developing. While partnerships with welfare agencies promote pupils’ well-being satisfactorily, overall they are inadequate because they have insufficient impact on improving pupils’ learning outcomes. Other partnerships are beginning to strengthen the curriculum and promote pupils’ personal development. The school is promoting community cohesion satisfactorily. Although it is promoted in a range of contexts locally, pupils’ understanding and experience of different religions and cultures in Britain and further afield is a developing area of work.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. Since the last inspection, both the accommodation and practices have been reviewed and modified. They reflect the school’s satisfactory understanding of early years education and have resulted in appropriate provision. The outdoor provision, while an improving feature since the last inspection, requires further refinement in the organisation of learning, which is presently being planned. The range of activities in the classroom enables the children to develop and practise a variety of skills. Aided by the support of the local authority, the staff have ensured that there is a satisfactory balance between teacher-led learning and the children discovering for themselves. During the inspection, the children enjoyed sorting and counting different objects associated with autumn and, aided by the staff’s questions, were able to extend their learning, for example, about texture and to practise counting in double digit numbers.

The children settle in quickly, helped by a range of opportunities for them and their parents and carers to visit before they start school. They behave satisfactorily and are increasingly taking into account the needs and feelings of other children. Regular opportunities to remind them to behave safely and considerately are built into the day. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader, supported by the local authority, ensures that staff plan together. Children’s learning is being assessed regularly and recorded in learning journals, which makes certain that children experience all areas of learning adequately.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Almost all of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaires agreed that their children enjoy school. A very large majority agreed with all of the other statements. Several parents and carers added comments, some of which praised the school for specific aspects, such as the approachability of the headteacher and her staff. A few individual queries and concerns were raised, which the inspection team found were being addressed. These include methods of dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Croft 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 131 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 352 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	77	59	51	39	1	1	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	77	59	49	37	4	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	54	41	72	55	3	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	37	75	57	3	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	53	40	72	55	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	53	40	73	56	3	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	42	71	54	4	3	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)	45	34	70	53	3	2	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	57	44	65	50	3	2	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	34	68	52	7	5	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	37	68	52	6	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	55	42	68	52	3	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	66	50	60	46	3	2	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.



10 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Croft Primary School, Sutton-in-Ashfield, NG17 5FJ

Thank you for your helpfulness when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you and watching you learn. Your views about your school were taken into account when we made our judgements.

You enjoy school and learning, especially lessons which give you lots to do, and after-school activities. You like learning through themes, which also enable you to practise a range of skills, such as making decisions and working as a team, as well as practising literacy, numeracy and computer-based skills. You trust the headteacher and staff, who care about you and help you.

The school, however, is not giving you the education that you need in order to prepare you satisfactorily for secondary school. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 are not reaching the standards they should and their learning is not improving quickly enough. You are also not making the progress that you should through the school and the levels that you reach in mathematics by the end of Year 6 are low.

We have judged that your school needs 'special measures' so that it can receive support to improve teaching and the work that leaders and managers do to support and improve your school.

Inspectors have asked the headteacher and your teachers to check that you all have targets which you know, understand and use to help you learn more quickly through work that gives you a good level of challenge. We have also asked teachers to use marking to tell you what you have done well and how to do even better. All the senior staff need to work closely with the headteacher to raise your attainment. The governing body has been asked to check carefully on the school's progress so that governors know how to help to improve the school.

We hope that you will play your part in helping to make these improvements. Inspectors will visit your school regularly to check on progress.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Blakelock
Lead inspector

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