

North Crescent Primary School

North Crescent, Wickford, SS12 9AP

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- North Crescent Primary School is well led and managed. Governors and staff share a common vision to provide a happy, secure and stimulating environment where children are motivated to learn and reach their full potential.
- The senior leadership group has developed a strong teaching team and a friendly, harmonious and purposeful working atmosphere. The quality of teaching is checked rigorously in a continual drive for improvement.
- Teaching is consistently good and some is outstanding. Good relationships between pupils and teachers have been established and lessons are well planned to interest and motivate pupils.
- The school checks on pupils' progress closely and uses well-targeted support to ensure any pupils who are under achieving quickly get back on track.
- Pupils' rate of progress and their attainment continue to improve, most notably in mathematics. Pupils' progress in all subjects is good and they achieve standards in line with national averages.
- Pupils get on happily together and behave well in lessons, at playtimes and as they move around the school. They enjoy learning and feel safe and valued.
- A wide range of well-planned activities ensure that children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They settle in quickly and learn how to share and take turns.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attendance is not high enough.
- Pupils do not do as well in English, particularly writing, as they do in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons or parts of lessons, including six joint observations with senior leaders, and looked at pupils' written work in their books and on display.
- Meetings were held with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher and other school leaders and with one representative of the local authority and the school improvement consultant.
- Inspectors spoke formally to two groups of pupils and informally with other pupils in lessons and around the school, and listened to other pupils reading.
- A number of the school's documents were examined. These included the school's information about pupils' progress and the support given to pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs, the school's own checks on its performance and its improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, evidence about monitoring and evaluating teaching and records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of 16 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), together with the views expressed by parents as they arrived at school to pick up their children, and analysed 22 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

James McVeigh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Margaret Pawlowski

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- North Crescent Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school and has one class in each year group, except Year 2 which has two small classes.
- The large majority of pupils come from a White British background and the remainder from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds; the largest of these groups are pupils with a Romany and Traveller heritage. There are fewer pupils than average who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (extra government funding for specific groups of pupils including those known to be eligible for free school meals and children in local authority care) is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average and the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the level of attendance by maintaining the relentless focus on promoting the benefits of full attendance to all parents, particularly parents in hard-to-reach families.
- Improve pupils' achievement in writing by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their writing skills in all genres of writing
 - insisting on good presentation of written work in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- School data show that pupils now make good progress in all years in English and mathematics. Their progress has been steadily improving in the last three years. Overall, progress in mathematics is stronger than in English and, in particular, writing.
- Children enter the Reception class with skills, knowledge and abilities below those expected for their age particularly in literacy. Children settle in well and make good progress in a well organised and stimulating Early Years Foundation Stage. Adults provide a wide range of interesting activities linked closely to children's learning needs, regularly engage in conversations to promote language development and check how well children are doing. However, when pupils start Year 1, they are still below the level of development expected, particularly in literacy.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in the Key Stage 1. The standards pupils reach at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 have continued to rise in mathematics and English in recent years. Standards in Key stage 1, in mathematics and reading, reached national averages, but lagged slightly behind in writing. In Key Stage 2, in 2013, pupils achieved the results predicted by the school and pupils' standards in mathematics and English were broadly average, though higher in mathematics. Pupils are predicted to do even better in 2014.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are catered for well by the school. Pupils are identified accurately and clearly distinguished from others who are underachieving due to other reasons, such as poor attendance. They receive effective and well-targeted extra help. Learning support assistants are well trained to support them and teachers plan work that will meet their individual needs. Consequently, this group of pupils make good progress. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language make as good or better progress than their peers.
- Reading is promoted effectively by the school. Reading logs, high quality book corners in classrooms, visiting authors, a well-resourced library and a workshop to support parents listening to reading at home encourage pupils to read regularly. Pupils enjoy reading and always have a book on loan. A few pupils do not have enough books at home to support their developing literacy skills well. Phonics (the sounds letters make) is taught well so that early readers use effective strategies to read new words. Pupils' performance in the phonics screening check improved over 2012 results and was close to the national average.
- The school makes effective use of the funding to support less advantaged pupils, who make at least good progress. In 2012, the attainment gap between pupils in Year 6 who were eligible for the pupil premium and others was around three months in writing and eight months in reading and mathematics. In 2013, the gap had closed to two months in reading and mathematics and they were ahead by two months in writing.
- The school is using the new primary school sports funding to employ professional sports coaches and develop in-school coaching expertise so that pupils are given good opportunities to experience a wider range of sporting activities and develop a life-long love of sport.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has been improved through rigorous monitoring and well-focused support for teachers to achieve targets for performance. Teaching is consistently good and some

is outstanding. Teachers have a consistent and effective approach to planning and design activities to meet the learning needs of all pupils.

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and productivity. They plan activities that interest and motivate pupils. In an outstanding Year 6 mathematics lesson, excited pupils were thoroughly engrossed as 'secret spies' breaking 'enemy' communication codes. The brisk pace of the teaching and range of activities added to the outstanding progress that all pupils made.
- Teachers usually check on pupils' progress regularly in lessons and reshape the activity in light of this. For example, some Year 3 pupils were quickly moved on to harder work when they had mastered addition and subtraction of two-digit numbers.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do in lessons because teachers model expected outcomes well and use pupils' own ideas to design steps to success. Pupils have good opportunities to compare their ideas in 'partner talk' and assess each other's work.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and often question pupils skilfully to make them think harder and extend their understanding. Skilful questioning in an outstanding Year 6 English lesson helped pupils to know how to improve their non-chronological reports based on a visit to Duxford Imperial War Museum.
- Marking of written work is regular and detailed. Teachers celebrate pupils' successes and usually give advice on how to improve. Pupils value the advice and are given good opportunities to respond to it at the start of each day. Pupils complete the exercises in their books but do not always pay enough attention to their presentation.
- Teachers have established good relationships with their pupils and manage their classes easily. Little time is wasted correcting behaviour. Excellent relationships seen in Reception activities promoted children's confidence and developed their independence well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy learning at school where they are happy and feel valued and well cared for. As Year 4 pupils said, 'It's a friendly place to be'. They are proud of their school. They are eager to take on extra responsibilities, for example, play leader, house captain and school council representative. Pupils think their lessons are interesting and know they can turn to their teachers or other adults if they need help with work or are upset.
- Pupils know the school's behaviour management system, its sanctions and rewards. They have positive attitudes to learning and are aware that their behaviour affects their progress. Pupils get on well with one another in lessons, collaborating sensibly in group work, and behave considerately when moving around the school and at playtimes. They say that poor behaviour is not common.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms it can take. They consider that bullying is rare and adults would sort it out quickly if it did occur. Governors, staff and most parents agree that pupils behave well at school. School records confirm that there have been very few incidents of misbehaviour over the last few years and they have been handled appropriately.
- Pupils know about health and safety. For example, they understand the concept of a healthy diet and regular exercise, and know how to cross the road or use the internet safely. They have

learned about 'stranger danger' and fire safety from visits to police and fire departments.

- Despite the school's strenuous efforts, pupils' attendance has been slow to improve and is still below average. Besides celebrating good attendance and constant reminders to parents, the school has appointed a family liaison officer with relevant training to link with families of Romany and Traveller heritage. She works closely with the education welfare services. Most pupils do attend regularly but a few are persistent absentees.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is led and managed well. The headteacher and other senior leaders are good role models for others; professional, focused and enthusiastic. They have helped to establish a friendly, orderly and purposeful ethos in the school. They are ably supported by subject leaders with clear roles in improving teaching and pupils' achievement in their subject areas. Their track record of success demonstrates the school's capacity for further improvement.
- Senior leaders continually strive to improve the quality of teaching in the school and pupils' achievement. Through observations of lessons, scrutiny of teachers' plans and pupils' work, school leaders gain an accurate understanding of each teacher's strengths and areas for development. Training and other types of support, such as mentoring and lesson study (action research on the impact of teaching), are closely matched to teachers' individual needs. Teachers are set challenging targets, linked to the school's improvement plan and pupils' achievement, for improvement.
- The school is meticulous in gathering, recording and analysing pupils' progress. Regular meetings occur between senior staff and teachers to consider each pupil's progress closely. Consequently, planned interventions to support under-achieving pupils are timely, well-targeted and effective.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well organised. Parents are closely involved in settling children into the school setting through regular discussions with teachers and home visits. Learning support assistants give extra help to children who do not get enough support at home, for example, by reading with them more often. Children's progress is assessed regularly and recorded clearly in learning journey booklets which are shared with parents. Transition into Reception and from Reception into the more formal Year 1 is well thought-out and smooth.
- Pupils experience a broad and balanced range of subjects to develop their skills well. English and mathematics are suitably prominent each day and other topics are brought to life by stimulating and memorable activities. Pupils talk animatedly about their trip to a war museum and experiencing life in a Victorian classroom. Classroom displays and 'working walls' showing current learning create good climates for learning. Further enhancements come from outdoor learning in the school's ecocentre, visitors, such as authors, and a good range of clubs, including a homework club, particularly for pupils who are not well supported at home.
- The school is effective in ensuring equality of opportunity for all and discouraging all forms of discrimination, for example, by supporting less privileged pupils so they reach similar standards to their peers.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through, for example, assemblies and working together on stage and musical productions. Pupils have studied a range of religions and understand the need for respect and tolerance. The school is linked with a partner school in Gambia and pupils communicate with fellow pupils there to

compare school work and lifestyles.

- The school has established productive partnerships with other local primary and secondary schools, for example, to share best practice in communicating with hard-to-reach families and to provide specialist teaching and activities at the Wickford Collaborative Learning Centre.
- The local authority has given the school good support on its journey of improvement. It now considers it needs only light touch support.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a wide range of relevant skills. Several governors are recent appointments and further school-specific training is planned for them. Governors understand information about school performance and ask searching questions to evaluate the quality of the school's work. They are well informed through clear information from the headteacher and their own focused visits.
 - Governors know about the quality of teaching and its link with pupils' progress. They are involved in drawing up the school's improvement plan and in setting robust targets for the headteacher. Governors make sound financial decisions, such as allocating the pupil premium to promote better achievement and ensuring the rewards teachers receive are warranted and based on meeting performance targets. All statutory arrangements for safeguarding are securely in place.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 115242 |
| Local authority | Essex |
| Inspection number | 425240 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 207 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Lynne Middleton |
| Headteacher | Lisa Wright |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8 February 2012 |
| Telephone number | 01268 765905 |
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