

Creswick Primary and Nursery School

Sir John Newsom Way, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 4FL

Inspection dates 20–21 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Pupils make good progress from below-average starting points. Currently, most pupils are achieving well and attainment in Year 6 has risen markedly over the past year.
- Teaching is at least good and some is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan learning which is enjoyable and stimulating so that pupils are excited to learn.
- Children get off to a good start to school in the Nursery and the Reception classes and make good progress.
- Pupils' good behaviour in lessons contributes well to their good achievement. They have positive attitudes to learning and feel safe in school at all times.
- Leaders are effective in improving the quality of teaching and in raising achievement across the school.
- Governors play an effective role in supporting school development and in holding leaders to account for pupils' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in writing is not as strong as in other subjects because writing skills are not promoted consistently well across all subjects.
- Teachers sometimes do not use information about what pupils already know and can do to set challenging work, particularly for the more-able pupils.
- Marking does not always give pupils clear guidance about how to improve their work, and pupils sometimes lack the opportunity to correct and improve it.
- The outstanding practice seen in teaching and learning has yet to be shared across the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 19 lessons, of which one was observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons and learning areas. The inspectors also listened to pupils in Years 2 and 6 reading.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of staff, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, another governor, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of 71 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and 48 responses to a staff questionnaire. The inspector also spoke with parents during the inspection.
- The inspector looked at pupils' books and at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current attainment and progress, the school's evaluation of its performance, improvement plans, documentation relating to teachers' performance over time and records relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Victoria Turner

Additional Inspector

Graham Gossage

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is below the national average and there are a very small proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for those in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been some changes in staffing, including to the senior leadership team, over the past two years. The deputy headteacher has left the school and the assistant headteacher is currently acting as the deputy headteacher. Some new teachers have joined the school as the school has now expanded with more classes in Key Stage 1.
- The school is a member of the local schools' consortium, which includes several local primary schools and the local secondary school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently use assessment information to set tasks that build on what pupils already know and understand, and that challenge all groups of pupils, especially the more able
 - making sure that all pupils are given clear guidance from the marking of their work on what to do to improve it, and have time to do the corrections and improvements called for
 - sharing the outstanding practice in teaching and learning seen during the inspection across the school.
- Speed up pupils' progress further in writing across the school by:
 - extending the opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in all subjects, especially in Key Stage 2.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Nursery and Reception with knowledge and skills that are typically below those expected for their age. They make consistently good progress and the proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the time they start in Year 1 is above the national average.
- The national test results at the end of Year 6 dipped in 2012 and 2013. The school responded effectively to resolve this issue by improving the quality of teaching through rigorous checking of teaching and a very effective staff-training programme. Consequently, standards have risen for all groups of pupils, irrespective of ethnic heritage, in the current school year in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's data on pupils' progress in the current academic year, supported by the work seen in their books and in lessons, show that progress in all areas has accelerated significantly and pupils are on track to reach high standards at the end of Year 6. The more-able pupils are making good progress and an increasing proportion is, currently, attaining high scores in Year 6.
- In Key Stage 2, progress in writing is, currently, not as strong as in reading and mathematics. This is because, although pupils write for different purposes in English, opportunities for writing in other subjects are limited.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was above average in 2013, when standards in reading and mathematics were ahead of those in writing. A strong focus on phonics (the linking of sounds and letters) has ensured rapid progress in reading skills over the past two years. Pupils were ahead of national standards in the phonics screening check in both 2012 and 2013. Pupils' reading skills have advanced considerably across the school in the current academic year.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to that of other pupils in their classes because the school provides well-targeted support for them. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also make equally good progress to that of their classmates – and sometimes better.
- Pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding are supported well by a range of effective programmes. Consequently, most have made faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics than previously, narrowing the gap in attainment between them and their classmates. However, there was still an attainment gap of approximately four terms for Year 6 in 2013, although reduced from the previous year. Inspection findings show a marked improvement in the current year. The school's current data indicate that the gap in attainment has narrowed to less than a term in reading and writing and, in mathematics, from nearly three terms to one and half terms.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved significantly over the past two years. All parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, are right to agree that teaching is good. Staff provide a positive and purposeful environment for learning. They have good relationships with pupils and celebrate their work. Pupils know that staff are interested in what they have to

say and value their views. As a result, they want to do well, respond readily to tasks with interest and make good progress.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage thrive in a stimulating learning environment and are helped in pursuing activities of their own choice as well as those directed by adults. They have good opportunities to use and apply their developing literacy and numeracy skills. For example, following their visit to a farm, children in the Nursery learned about baby animals and made their own 'Old MacDonald' rhymes, using the names of the baby animals. They count and observe with keen interest how tadpoles grow into frogs.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding and challenge them to think more deeply about their learning. They build well on pupils' prior learning, drawing on what they already know. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, all groups of pupils were fully engaged in solving a range of problems, used their prior knowledge and enhanced their thinking skills effectively to complete the tasks successfully.
- The teaching of reading is good. The teaching deepens pupils' understanding of different styles of texts and helps them to analyse events and characters. Pupils are increasingly writing for different purposes in English. They use imaginative words to describe events and characters. However, they do not have the opportunity to write at length in other subjects, such as science and history, to help reinforce the written skills learned in English lessons.
- The teaching of phonics is strong. This was seen in a Year 1 session where a systematic approach and the use of excellent resources ensured very rapid progress for all pupils in extending their phonic skills. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers in planning and delivering this programme. They also provide effective support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those who are supported by the pupil premium.
- Teachers usually plan learning that is pitched at the right level for all groups of pupils, but this good practice is not shared across the school. Teachers do not always use assessment information effectively enough to ensure that all groups, particularly the more-able pupils, are stretched to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and celebrate pupils' achievement but do not always provide clear guidance on how to improve their work. Sometimes, where corrections and improvements are suggested, pupils are not given time to respond, so they do not make as much progress as they should.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy school and their attitudes to learning are good. They are polite and respectful of each other and adults. They are well mannered and get on well with learning. There is no disruption to learning in lessons.
- Pupils behave well and grow up as mature and confident learners. There are helpful procedures for adults to use to manage pupils' behaviour. These are applied effectively and pupils respond well to them. Pupils thrive in the school's harmonious environment, where everyone is valued and respected.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders make sure that access to the

school is secure and that staff are rigorously checked before they are appointed. Pupils believe that they are kept safe in school and almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agree with them.

- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe, including when using the internet or the road, or in case of fire. They understand these hazards because the issues are often included in lessons and in the school's work with parents. Older pupils have designed leaflets and posters explaining how to use the internet safely.
- Pupils understand different types of bullying, including name-calling, racism and cyber-bullying. They say that bullying is rare in the school. They are confident that if it did occur it would be dealt with quickly and fairly.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility. As play leaders, Year 6 pupils organise and lead games for the younger pupils at lunchtime. The school council is well involved in the planning for the improvement of the playground and healthy meals for the lunch menu. Currently, pupils are raising funds for a visit to a school in Uganda so as to develop a link with their own school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, other senior leaders and governors communicate high expectations of what pupils can achieve and are persistently driving forward improvements in teaching and achievement. The school's self-evaluation accurately assesses what it is doing well and what still needs to be improved.
- Staff with responsibility for subjects and key stages, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, contribute well to school improvement.
- Systems to monitor teachers' performance are effective and identify the skills they need to improve their practice. The quality of teaching is monitored effectively against challenging individual targets for staff, which are regularly reviewed. Well-planned programmes of training have helped teachers to improve their work markedly. However, there are too few opportunities for teachers to observe best practice in teaching and learning in the school.
- The school provides a varied range of subjects that give all groups of pupils many enjoyable learning experiences. Appropriate emphasis is given to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, although pupils have too few opportunities to practise writing across subjects. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the teaching of different subjects, including religious studies, and a wide range of clubs and trips.
- The school ensures that there is no discrimination of any kind. Leaders have made good progress to ensuring equality of opportunity across the school. However, they have not yet ensured that work is equally challenging for all pupils.
- The school uses the additional sports funds in a variety of ways. These include working with a specialist from a secondary school to enhance pupils' skills and teachers' expertise. The school has also secured appropriate sports equipment and increased the range of sports available to pupils and the numbers of pupils participating.

- The local authority has provided effective support to the school, which has helped it to improve quickly within a short time, particularly by working with the senior leaders to check on the progress and impact of the school's work. Partnerships with local schools also help the school to share and develop good practice.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have been well involved in the school's action to improve achievement and teaching. They choose an area for development each term and check the progress made in the chosen area through visits to the school and reports from the headteacher and subject leaders. They understand how pupils are performing compared with national standards because they competently analyse the published data to compare pupils' achievement with national figures and hold leaders to account for the school's performance. The governing body has a clear understanding of how underperformance is tackled to raise achievement and makes sure that teachers are only rewarded if their performance ensures pupils' good progress. Governors ensure that the resources available through pupil premium and primary sport funding are spent effectively to support pupils' achievement and that the school budget is efficiently managed. They ensure that the procedures for safeguarding pupils meet national requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
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

Unique reference number	117229
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	429991

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	357
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Hegarty
Headteacher	Fay Brett
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2009
Telephone number	01707 323038
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