

Croft Academy

Croft Street, Walsall, WS2 8JE

Inspection dates

2–3 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress. Basic concepts in mathematics are not developed systematically and then applied by pupils.
- Pupils do not develop their skills in handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation well enough. They do not have enough opportunities to write at length.
- Teaching does not provide pupils with enough challenge, particularly the more able. Teachers do not regularly give pupils feedback on their work and check this is acted upon.
- Behaviour requires improvement as sometimes pupils do not behave well in their lessons and are not always engaged in their work.
- Leaders and managers have not improved teaching and achievement enough for them to be good.
- The checks made on staff and pupils' work are not always carried out robustly to make sure that all staff follow the school's policies.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. Staff support them well, particularly in developing their communication and language skills. This prepares them well for Key Stage 1.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in the school and parents responding to the school's survey agree.
- Governors understand the strengths and areas for development in the school and challenge senior leaders for improvement.
- The sports funding is being used effectively to widen pupils' participation and enjoyment in sports.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 10 lessons or part lessons. Five observations were carried out with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the sponsor, the principal, vice principal and other staff.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, looked at the work they completed in lessons and in their books over time. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in lessons and around the school and held a meeting with the school council.
- There were not enough responses to the online Parent View survey for these to be scrutinised. The 27 responses to the school's own survey were reviewed and parents' views were gathered from informal conversations.
- The inspection team reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's review of its performance and plans for the future, data on the performance of pupils, minutes of meetings of the governing body, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding information.

Inspection team

Susan Williams, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Nicholas Capron

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Pupils come from a wide range of different backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the additional funding known as the pupil premium is double the national average. In this school, this supports pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is just below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is less than half the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the national expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school became a sponsored academy with The Elliot Foundation in September 2012. When its predecessor school, Croft Community Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory overall.
- The school federated with Rough Hay Academy in April 2013. The principal oversees the school on three days of the week and the vice principal on two days. Other senior staff work across both schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - providing more challenge for pupils, particularly the more able
 - regularly giving pupils feedback about their work and checking this is acted upon
 - ensuring pupils always behave well in lessons and are engaged in their work.
- Raise achievement so that it is good by ensuring that:
 - basic mathematical concepts are systematically acquired and applied
 - pupils improve their skills in handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write at length.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring quality assurance processes are more rigorous so that policies are followed by all staff.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils do not make consistently good progress, including more able pupils. The basic mathematical concepts in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division are not systematically acquired throughout the school and applied by pupils in their work.
- Pupils do not develop their skills well enough in handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation. They do not have enough opportunities to use these skills to write longer pieces to develop their writing skills more fully.
- Attainment at Key Stage 2 was below average in reading, mathematics and in the spelling, grammar and punctuation test in 2013. Writing was closer to the national average. In 2014, the school projections indicate improvements in all areas, although pupils are still likely to do less well in the spelling, grammar and punctuation test.
- Pupils do better at Key Stage 1. In 2013, reading and mathematics were broadly average while writing was below average. There are improvements in all three areas in 2014, with a similar proportion of pupils reaching Level 2 in writing as the other two areas.
- In the phonics (letters and their sounds) screening check in 2013, a similar proportion of pupils reached the required standard as the national average. This was maintained with a similar proportion of pupils reaching this standard this year. Pupils are able to sound out words they cannot read and apply the strategies they have learnt to help them. The school is promoting reading with sets of books for pupils to take home to encourage them to read more widely.
- Pupils write in a range of styles and genres. They discuss their ideas for their writing and prepare their work thoroughly on different topics. In Year 6, some of these are linked to events to enthuse the pupils, including a piece of writing on whether or not a member of staff should run a mile.
- The school has started to develop pupils' mathematics skills with common ways of teaching mathematics in this school. Pupils are starting to get better at mathematics although this is not systematic enough to ensure pupils develop their skills thoroughly throughout the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive extra help and some of these pupils are making much faster progress. However, similar to other pupils, this is not consistently good. Different groups of pupils achieve similarly.
- Pupils eligible for support from additional funding receive a range of extra help, including in class and one-to-one support. There have also been opportunities for additional activities, including a group of pupils attending a field centre. This support is effective. In the national tests in 2013, these pupils were approximately one third of a national curriculum level ahead in mathematics and reading and half a level in writing. Their progress and attainment is similar or better to those of other pupils in the school. This demonstrates the school's drive to support equality of opportunity for pupils' learning.
- Children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age, particularly in their communication and language development. This has been a particular focus for the school and a specialist supports staff in developing children's speaking. Staff made good use of a trip to a theme park to encourage the children to answer questions in full sentences to develop their skills. Children now make good progress and more reached a good level of development this year than in 2013.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching in English and mathematics has not been strong enough for pupils to make good progress. Teachers do not always provide enough challenge for pupils to ensure they make as much progress as they can, particularly more able pupils. There are also occasions where pupils

are not engaged in their work. Teachers do not regularly give pupils feedback on how to improve their work. Where feedback is given, teachers do not always make sure this is followed up by pupils and that they do corrections and work on the next steps in their learning. As a result, progress slows.

- Pupils make faster progress over time when they are encouraged to plan and present their work clearly and in a logical way. Pupils receive high quality marking with positive comments and 'fix its' where pupils do corrections or work harder examples provided by the teacher. This is supporting better progress in this subject with this class.
- Topics shared across the two schools enables pupils have the opportunity to learn how to write in different ways. Where pupils get the opportunity to write longer pieces more regularly, such as in Year 6, their progress is faster.
- Some teaching assistants work well with teachers to support the pupils they work with in lessons. Some are particularly effective in asking pupils questions to help them think about what they are learning about, which supports their understanding.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are well taught. Teachers and other staff provide interesting activities for children which engage them with their learning. For example, children in Reception enjoyed counting out containers of sand, writing a short sentence using sounds they had learnt in the morning and playing cricket. This supports their good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils do not always behave well in lessons across the school or with different teachers. Their attitudes to learning are not consistently positive and there is some low-level disruption when pupils are not engaged in their work.
- Some pupils raised concerns about lessons being disrupted by pupils' behaviour. Around the school in corridors, in the playground and in the lunch hall, pupils are generally well behaved. The number of incidents of poor behaviour is reducing.
- The school is effective in promoting positive relationships and ensuring there is no discrimination. Racist incidents are dealt with thoroughly. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well with each other.
- Pupils are not worried about bullying and understand what this is. They know that staff will help them if they have a problem.
- Pupils take on different responsibilities to develop their skills in their community including the school council. Play leaders and sports leaders are being developed to work with younger pupils.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils spoken to by inspectors said that they felt safe in the school. All parents who responded to the school's survey supported this view.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and not to go with strangers. They learn about cyber bullying and how to keep themselves safe on the internet.
- Attendance has improved to be broadly average and persistent absence has halved.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement as they have not ensured that teaching and achievement are good. Quality assurance processes to check on pupils' learning are not carried out rigorously enough to make sure that policies are followed by all staff. Marking is not always done regularly with 'fix its' for pupils to follow up in the morning sessions which have been set aside for this.
- The principal and vice principal have identified the correct priorities for improvement so teaching and achievement are improving. Middle leaders are being well supported to help staff and

improvements are starting to be seen, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

- Staff have clear targets for improvement. They are entitled to professional development dependent on the stage of their career. This includes support from staff at the partner school and courses at a local teaching school.
- Literacy and numeracy are given appropriate priority in the curriculum. Topics such as the Victorians are made more interesting, with pupils visiting a Victorian museum. Specialist staff support teachers in delivering some subjects, including music and sports. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted, with pupils being encouraged to think about the consequences of their actions and moral issues being discussed in assemblies. The school organises a range of trips, including museums and art galleries, and has musicians visit the school to develop pupils' understanding of the cultural value of the performing arts.
- The sports funding is used effectively to provide increased opportunities for sports. It has supported teams, including the girls' football team, who reached the local semi-final and the boys' team who reached the local final. Other teams include cricket and 'high five' netball where the school team won the league. More resources have been bought and a sports coach supports teachers in planning and delivering their lessons. A new multi-sports club has been established for pupils to take part in a range of sports. There are plans to develop community use of facilities and train football coaches to work in the school.
- The sponsor has worked effectively to support senior leaders in their roles and to develop the skills of middle leaders. Training has been provided for staff and governors to develop their skills.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There are joint governing body meetings for the two schools held at each site alternately. Governors understand the published data on the school and that this was poor in 2013. They receive updates on the progress currently being made by pupils and can compare this across year groups and between the schools. They know how the additional funding is being spent and that this is making a difference for these pupils. They ensure safeguarding meets statutory requirements. The process of setting targets for the principal is overseen by the academy trust. Governors are aware of this for other staff and ensure pay awards are rewarded for strong performance. They know about the quality of teaching and about where support has been provided and how underperformance has been addressed.

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	138420
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	426888

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Harper
Principal	Mark Klelot
Date of previous school inspection	not previously inspected
Telephone number	01922 720689
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Email address	areese@croft.walsallschool.sch.uk

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