

Croft Primary School

Mustard Lane, Croft, Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 7DG

Inspection dates 2–3 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This is a caring, successful and improving school.
- Highly skilled and passionate leadership by the new headteacher, very ably supported by the deputy headteacher and governors, has led to improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement. Morale is high.
- Governors provide rigorous challenge and support. They feel energised by the passion and drive of the headteacher and are fully committed to continuous improvement.
- All groups of pupils in all key stages make at least good progress from their starting points. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils reach standards usually well above those expected nationally, particularly in reading and mathematics. Standards across the school are rising.
- Teaching is at least good and is improving. Staff rise to the challenge to make their teaching be as effective as it can be. Pupils' highly positive, nurturing and trusting relationships with staff boost their self-esteem and confidence in learning.
- Reading and mathematical skills are taught particularly well. A systematic approach enables pupils to build and confidently apply their reading as they move through the school. Pupils use their strong understanding of mathematical concepts to solve mathematical problems.
- Provision in the early years is good. Due to good teaching and effective support, children achieve well and sometimes outstandingly so from their different starting points.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and sometimes outstanding. Pupils show a pride in their school, feel safe and enjoy learning. Their eagerness to learn is reflected in their good punctuality and above average and improving attendance.
- An exciting and stimulating range of learning experiences promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils have a good understanding of British values. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Strong and positive relationships exist with parents, external agencies and partners.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in writing is not as strong as in reading and mathematics. Fewer pupils reach the higher levels of attainment in writing.
- Work is not always pitched at the right level to challenge the varying abilities of pupils, particularly the most able.
- Teachers' marking does not always reflect the school's marking policy. Not all pupils are clear how to improve their work.
- It is not always crystal clear how the success of actions planned by middle leaders to improve teaching and achievement will be measured.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the learning of pupils in all classes across school.
- The inspectors looked closely at pupils' work in lessons, in a wide range of books and on display around school. Inspectors listened to some pupils read. Inspectors made careful checks on records of the progress of pupils, their behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke often to pupils during the inspection and met with groups of pupils to discuss their views of school.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior and middle leaders. Inspectors met with governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including the school's own view of its performance, plans for improvement and policies and procedures.
- Inspectors also checked closely on the work of governors and a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through checking the 16 responses to the online Parent View survey and the responses to the school's own survey of parental opinion.
- The inspectors took account of the views of staff expressed in the 16 responses to the voluntary inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Chris Maloney, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Shutt

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The current headteacher took up post in September 2014. There has also been a change in the Chair of the Governing Body since the last inspection.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A very small proportion of pupils are from other ethnic backgrounds and cultural traditions. No pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through pupil premium funding is much lower than the national average. This additional government funding is provided for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Children attend the Reception class full time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' achievement in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school works in close partnership with other local pre-school settings, primary schools and Culcheth High School.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club. These are subject to separate inspection. Reports for these settings may be viewed at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching in order to raise achievement in writing, particularly the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels of attainment, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers consistently plan work that is pitched at the right level to challenge the abilities of all pupils, particularly the most able
 - marking consistently reflects the school's marking policy so that all pupils are clear how to improve their work.
- Strengthen the role of middle leaders, by ensuring that their planned actions to improve teaching and the achievement of pupils are always clear and measurable.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher, extremely well supported by the deputy headteacher, shows a passionate and unyielding determination to make the school the best it can be. In a relatively short time, she has galvanised staff and governors into a strong and united team. All have a clear focus on developing 'healthy, happy and confident children' who aim high. As a result, the quality of teaching and achievement of pupils are improving, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Staff morale is highly positive. They feel valued and their efforts appreciated. A typical staff comment was, 'I feel valued, respected and am constantly being given support to develop myself as a teacher. Morale is high and we are motivated to move every individual child on in their learning.'
- Senior leaders know the school well and understand what needs to improve further. They have used their knowledge well to construct detailed and effective plans for further improvements. Priorities are aimed at improving the achievement of the most able pupils, particularly in writing and fully embedding the school's marking policy.
- Senior leaders meet regularly with teachers to check how well all pupils are learning. Any pupil in danger of falling behind is given the precise help they need to catch up. Senior leaders have ensured that the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. Skilled additional support results in disadvantaged pupils progressing equally well and sometimes better than others in the school.
- Senior leaders make it clear that nothing less than at least good teaching is good enough. Staff training has improved and regular checks on teaching are followed up to ensure improvements have been made. There are good opportunities for staff to share their practice in school and in other schools.
- The promotion of equal opportunities is good. All pupils have effective support and equal access to a stimulating curriculum. Leaders are fully committed to helping all pupils reach their potential.
- Middle leaders, including those new to the role, support the vision of senior leaders for continuous improvement and high expectations. They are highly enthusiastic to improve their work. However, it is not always crystal clear how the impact of their actions to improve teaching and learning will be measured. This is hindering the effectiveness of their work.
- The curriculum skilfully links subjects together to provide many exciting and creative learning opportunities. These are enriched with visits, visitors and residentials. Pupils have good opportunities to learn French and attend a wealth of lunchtime and after-school clubs.
- Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and this is supported through strong promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Strong and positive relationships are fostered through the provision of good opportunities for pupils to celebrate and appreciate differences in culture and traditions. Staff promote British values well, including tolerance and respect for the rule of law. This prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Good use is being made of the additional primary school funding for physical education and sport. Improvements are clearly evident in staff confidence and competence through improved training and support. The employment of specialist coaches has led to increased opportunities for pupils to develop skills and in greater participation in additional clubs and activities such as, tennis, judo and cricket. Opportunities have increased for pupils to engage in competitive sports like tag rugby. There is clear evidence that pupils' well-being and healthy lifestyles are improving.
- Positive links exist with parents. Although there were a few negative responses on Parent View, discussions with many parents during the inspection and the school's own surveys found no evidence to explain these. Parents say they feel welcomed and supported. A typical parental comment was, 'I'm having no problems at all, any issues are picked up and dealt with straight away.'
- Close links with other local primary schools have led to sharing of practice and development of assessment of pupils' progress. A particularly strong partnership with Culcheth High School has helped with staff training and developments with individual subjects. It has also aided global partnership working, linking with Soweto, South Africa and with children exchanging letters with a primary school in Accrington.
- The school has a strong working relationship with the local authority. The school has received good support in improving teaching, learning, leadership and management.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements. Clear policies and procedures are in place. Regular checks by senior leaders and governors ensure these are effective.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is strong. Governors are well led and offer rigorous challenge and support to school leaders. They know the school well and visit regularly to check the school is continually improving. They say that they have been energised by the new headteacher and fully share her vision and passion for

improvement. Governors have strengthened their membership in terms of experience and specific expertise. They have a good understanding of the progress of all groups of pupils and how data on the progress of pupils compares to others in the local authority and nationally. They rigorously check on the quality of teaching and ensure teachers' pay progression and pay rewards link closely to pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.

- Governors keep a close eye on school finances and check that extra funding for physical education and sport and for disadvantaged pupils is having the positive impact it should. Robust checks are made, particularly to ensure safeguarding arrangements effectively meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are eager to learn and proud of their school. They typically say that they 'like this school because you get a good education. Teachers make lessons fun, they are kind and helpful and encourage us to do our best.' Pupils' positive attitudes to learning contribute well to their improving progress. Punctuality is good and attendance is above average and improving.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors. Pupils enthusiastically told inspectors how much they enjoy school. They behave well in lessons and around the school and get on well together. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are sometimes outstanding. This is when work captures their interests and imagination and challenges their thinking. However, when tasks are too easy or too hard, a very few pupils drift off-task hindering the progress they make.
- Pupils' highly positive relationships with staff help to boost pupils' confidence, self-esteem and determination to do their best. They enjoy the wide range of responsibilities on offer, such as being a school councillor, house captain or buddy. Older pupils relish the opportunity to be a representative on the 'send my friend to school' team who help raise awareness of children across the world who do not have the opportunity to go to school. Pupils eagerly told inspectors about the many clubs they can attend, such as drama, tag rugby, tennis, gardening and instrument tuition. They also enjoy learning French.
- Pupils enjoy opportunities to celebrate cultural differences and appreciate people's rights to hold different beliefs. Pupils typically say, 'Everyone has the right to believe in different things as long as those beliefs don't make you hurt others.'

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves and others safe. Older pupils have a secure understanding of the potential dangers of using the internet. A typical comment from pupils was, 'You must never share personal information.' Pupils enjoy using the school's Virtual Learning Environment where they can learn, explore and share ideas in a secure setting online.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take, such as cyber-bullying and bullying as a result of prejudice. The school's anti-bullying week deepens their understanding. They say bullying does not happen in school but are confident staff would deal effectively with any that did.
- Parents are confident their children are kept safe. This is reflected in their discussions with inspectors. It is also supported by the positive response to the online Parent View survey and in their response to the school's own recent survey, where 96% of the 80 responses from parents agreed their children feel safe.
- The school has robust systems in place to ensure that pupils are safe and that the site is both safe and secure. Adults who work with pupils are rigorously vetted as being suitable to work with children.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers and teaching assistants know pupils well and value them as individuals. These foster highly positive and trusting relationships which motivate pupils to work hard and aim high. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes. This is reflected in their skilled behaviour management and the respect shown by pupils and their enthusiasm for learning. This contributes strongly to their improving achievement.
- Staff encourage pupils to talk about, assess and share their learning with others in class. This encourages pupils to cooperate and identify improvements to their work.

- Teachers stimulate and reinforce learning effectively. Regular checks are made on how well pupils are learning so tasks can be planned to meet pupils' different learning needs. Staff have responded well to senior leaders' guidance and high expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. However, activities are sometimes planned that do not meet pupils' varying learning needs and abilities closely enough because they lack challenge. As a result, some of the most able in particular do not make the progress they are capable of, especially in writing.
- Some teachers provide pupils with skilled guidance through marking on how to make their work better and then check that pupils have followed this up correctly. However, not all marking consistently reflects the school's marking policy, hindering the progress of some pupils, particularly in writing.
- The skilled and systematic teaching of reading helps build the skills and understanding pupils need as they move through school. Pupils receive a firm foundation in phonics (the sounds that letters make) to aid their reading. Skilled teaching assistants provide regular additional support to help pupils who need it.
- Pupils enjoy creative and stimulating opportunities to write. They have lots of opportunities to talk about and share their ideas. They particularly benefit from redrafting their work to demonstrate improvements; however, activities sometimes lack challenge and this sometimes slows progress in writing.
- Staff consolidate and strengthen pupils' mathematical abilities through regular revision of basic skills. Pupils are provided with opportunities to apply their skills regularly in solving interesting, practical problem-solving activities. Pupils are encouraged to explain why they have chosen particular strategies. This is helping pupils to consolidate and improve their mastery of mathematical concepts.

The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of pupils in all key stages, including children in the early years, are making at least good progress from their starting points.
- Standards by the end of Year 2 are significantly above average overall in reading, writing and mathematics, reflecting pupils' good and sometimes outstanding achievement from their starting points in Year 1. By the end of Year 6, pupils also typically reach standards that are significantly higher than average. Although in Year 6 in 2014, standards fell to above average, pupils made at least good progress relative to their particular starting points and learning needs.
- The proportion of pupils currently exceeding the rate of progress expected of them is increasing rapidly. This is particularly evident for pupils currently in Year 2 and Year 6. As a result, standards across the school are rising. Much larger proportions of pupils are now working at the higher levels of attainment, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Highly skilled systematic teaching of reading skills throughout school is improving achievement in reading. Skilled and sensitive support is given to those in danger of underachieving. In 2014, the results in the Year 1 national screening check on reading were broadly average, but pupils still made good progress from their starting points. Further improvements to the teaching of reading have led to a significantly above average number of current Year 1 pupils working at and beyond the expected standard. This reflects pupils' increasing confidence in identifying the sounds that letters make. Pupils continue to progress well and develop a love of reading as they move through school.
- Improvements in the teaching of writing have led to more opportunities for pupils to talk about their ideas and redraft their work to improve punctuation, grammar and choice of vocabulary. As a result, progress in writing is good and improving. However, achievement in writing is not as strong as in reading and mathematics, with fewer pupils reaching the higher levels of attainment.
- Pupils demonstrate increasingly secure basic skills in mathematics. Their mastery of mathematical concepts is improving strongly. This is because of improved opportunities for pupils to explore the most efficient strategies to use when solving problems and explain their reasons for the choices they make.
- The most able pupils are usually given more challenging and demanding work that deepens their understanding and stretches their abilities. As a result, the progress of the most able pupils is good overall and improving. However, this approach to supporting and challenging the most able is not consistent across school, especially in writing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are identified quickly so that no time is wasted in them receiving the targeted support they need. This support effectively meets their individual needs and ensures these pupils make good and, sometimes, outstanding progress.
- The small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups make good progress due to the skilled support they receive.
- There are too few disadvantaged pupils at the school for an analysis of their progress and attainment data to generate meaningful statistics. However, a study of the school's records of assessment data and pupils'

work confirm that disadvantaged pupils are achieving as well and sometimes better than others in school; no pupils are falling behind others in the school or pupils nationally.

The early years provision is good

- Most children usually start Reception with skills typical for their age, with approximately a third below this. All groups of children, including the most able and those with special educational needs, make at least good, and sometimes outstanding, progress from their starting points.
- In 2014, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year was below the national average and lower than in previous years. However, children made at least good progress from their lower than usual starting points. Most children in the Reception class this year are currently on track to reach a good level of development, above the national average for 2014. This is ensuring children are increasingly well prepared for Year 1.
- Children settle quickly due to the highly nurturing environment, well-established routines and strong links with parents and pre-school settings. Parents welcome being able to access assessments about their children's progress online and contributing evidence about their children's achievements electronically.
- Consistently good teaching ensures all children experience well-planned, stimulating and exciting learning opportunities. Children enjoy a good mixture of learning opportunities led by adults or chosen by themselves. Staff quickly get to know the children as individuals and use what they know about children's interests to help them learn and develop as individuals. The progress of every child is monitored closely so that opportunities are grasped to help children take the next steps in their learning. Staff quickly identify any children needing extra help and provide highly effective and skilled support.
- Indoor and outdoor areas effectively support curiosity and stimulate learning. Adults play alongside children to enhance their learning. Children enthusiastically follow their interests, such as in exploring the life of sea creatures and making pictures of eels and a coral reef.
- Children are eager to learn and behave well. They are eager to chat about their learning and respond positively to the encouragement and instructions of adults. Children know well how to stay safe.
- The development of children's reading and writing skills is promoted well. Children write their names and eagerly include adjectives to help improve the descriptive sentences they write.
- Skilled teaching of the sounds individual and combinations of letters make helps children to make good progress in their reading. They accurately identify these in sentences they read or write.
- Children's mathematical skills are promoted well. Staff eagerly reinforce number work, such as helping children predict and count the squares used to build a tall column. Children make up their own number games and use a 100 square to help them check who the winner was.
- Children have good opportunities to explore their learning through a wide range of visits and visitors.
- The quality of leadership and management in the early years is good. The leader knows exactly what the strengths are and what needs to improve further. All staff share the vision and drive for improvement.
- Robust risk assessments help keep children safe and secure. Regular checks by governors keep safeguarding under rigorous review. These ensure that safeguarding effectively meets 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	111179
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	461755

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	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Heather Hiley
Headteacher	Anne Mains
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2012
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