

Criftins CofE Primary School

Dudleston Heath, Ellesmere SY12 9LT

Inspection dates

19–20 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Pupils in this school receive an outstanding education that prepares them exceptionally well for their next steps.
- Almost every pupil in this small school makes at least good progress from their starting point, including disadvantaged pupils and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Attainment is well above the national average.
- Aspirations for pupils are consistently high. As a result, pupils have high expectations of themselves and are encouraged and supported to meet them.
- Teaching is outstanding and particularly strong in Years 5 and 6. Excellent subject knowledge, and an in-depth understanding of each pupil, ensures that lessons are planned to meet the needs and abilities of all pupils over time. Consequently, pupils are enthused by their learning and eager to undertake challenges.
- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They approach their learning with enthusiasm, showing respect for staff and their peers alike, in and out of the classroom. This makes a strong contribution to the highly positive environment for learning throughout the school.
- Teachers provide very effective written and oral feedback so that any misconceptions are rapidly addressed, ensuring progress is not impeded. However, pupils' handwriting and presentation is not always as good as it could be.
- The early years provision is good and improving. Children settle in quickly because the leader ensures that routines and expectations are established rapidly and activities are well-matched to their stage of learning.
- Leaders and governors have an unwavering vision of excellence that has been very successfully communicated to pupils, staff and parents. As a result, all stakeholders are working together in harmony to ensure that everything possible is done to support the development of pupils.
- Parents hold the school, its leaders and teachers in high esteem. They say that staff are always approachable and support is always forthcoming when it is needed.
- The governing body is highly effective. Members make sure that they know and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses exceptionally well. They challenge school leaders rigorously, but also provide extremely good support.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the early years provision so that it is outstanding, by:
 - further reducing the gap in rates of progress between boys and girls, particularly in reading and writing
 - ensure the learning environment provides additional opportunities to support children's access to all areas of the early years curriculum, including displaying phonics prompts.

- Improve handwriting and presentation across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The highly effective headteacher, very ably supported by her senior teacher, has been relentless in her drive to secure an outstanding education for all pupils. School leaders and governors have worked tirelessly to ensure that every member of the school community, including pupils and their parents, share and promote the school's vision for excellence. Consequently, the school environment is harmonious, aspirational and exceptionally conducive to learning.
- In this small school, the majority of teachers have additional responsibilities and senior leaders undertake many of the roles that in a larger school would be the responsibility of middle leaders. Nonetheless, subject leadership is rigorous and ensures that all teachers are held to account for the effectiveness of their teaching and for the progress of the pupils they teach. Leadership of the early years has been well-supported by senior leaders so that it is now good. Information gathered from monitoring activities across all phases of the school is used very well to identify any areas of relative weakness, which are tackled rapidly.
- Performance management is very well-planned and highly effective. Targets are set annually, but reviewed through a six-weekly cycle alongside the weekly 'drop-ins' carried out by the headteacher. As a result, teachers say that that performance management is not just an annual task, but a dialogue about professional development that is on-going throughout the year.
- The curriculum has been carefully reviewed to meet the needs of pupils and the requirements of the new primary curriculum. A topic approach to the delivery of the foundation subjects and science is meeting the needs and interests of pupils because they are asked to contribute their ideas about what they want to learn and the questions they want to answer. This enables their teachers to plan exciting activities so that, without exception, pupils are enthused and eager to learn.
- The school offers many additional activities to enhance pupils' experiences. Clubs include football, gardening, art, dance, hula hoop, choir and homework club. Breakfast and after-school clubs are also provided and these are greatly appreciated by parents and pupils. Of particular note are the lunchtime activities that are planned and run by pupils. These include football skills, science club, quiet club, animation club and lego club. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for these and take great trouble to plan what they are going to do in each session, demonstrating their ability to understand and take account of the needs of their attendees.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally good because it is embedded in the curriculum as well as woven through the fabric of the school day. Even the youngest children in the school know about different religions, cultures and traditions and show understanding of respect and tolerance for each other, playing and working happily together. Photographic displays in each classroom record the cultural activities undertaken, from traditional Indian cookery, to multi-cultural dancing. There is a strong focus on British values. Pupils understand about democracy and the law and are given many opportunities to develop this further, for example through voting for school council members, but also through the regular debates organised by their teachers about current affairs and interests.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively in this school. From the early years onwards, pupils are taught through discussion of their own circumstances, as well as planned activities, to understand and accept difference. Pupils spoke movingly to inspectors about their views, saying that what was important was being kind and understanding, not what was different about a person.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to enhance provision and resources. For instance, the school has employed additional support staff and funded educational visits and additional school clubs. Leaders also purchased an online mathematics programme and a reading programme that enables links between learning in school and learning at home. As a result of these measures, there is no gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in school and they make better progress than other pupils nationally.
- Primary sports funding has been used well to extend the range of activities that pupils can access, including taking part in competitive sport in the local area. Teachers have worked with coaches to improve their skills in delivering a range of sports. In addition, Year 5 and 6 pupils have taken part in ambassador training to enable them to act as referees for the sports and games played by younger children at lunchtimes.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is highly effective because governors have a deep understanding of the school's performance, its strengths and relative weaknesses. They are kept well informed by the headteacher, but also make sure that they have first-hand evidence through planned visits to the school and regular

involvement in extra-curricular activities.

- Governors have a thorough understanding of the link between teacher performance and pay progression and they have overseen development of the very rigorous process now in place. Minutes of governing body meetings record targeted challenge that demonstrates their understanding of what needs to be done to secure continuous improvement.
- Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met, that additional funding is spent appropriately and impact is monitored and reported regularly.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and governors have created a culture of caring and sharing that ensures pupils feel very safe to talk to any adult in the school if they have a problem. Teachers and other adults are very clear that all issues must be reported and recorded appropriately. As a result, safeguarding goes beyond statutory requirements as even small incidents are recorded for every child to ensure that no potential indicator of risk is missed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- All teachers know the needs, abilities and interests of the pupils they teach extremely well. They use a range of assessment information to ensure that they plan lessons which engage, enthuse and support rapid and sustained progress over time. Inspectors noted in all classrooms visited, the judicious balance of whole class, group and individual work that made learning accessible for all pupils.
- Teachers have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve and these are recognised by pupils who are eager to meet them because they are well supported to do so. For example, in a Year 5 and 6 mathematics lesson on fractions, pupils were collaborating with the teacher to identify a method for solving fractional problems. Once they felt secure in the method, they could choose to start practising independently, or to continue with harder examples. Nearly all chose to continue, but those who wished to practise first felt confident and comfortable to do so and then tackled the harder problems. This willingness to challenge themselves means that no pupil is ever held back by a lack of aspiration.
- All teachers and teaching assistants use questioning very well, including in the early years. Consequently, from an early age children are encouraged to express themselves as fluently as they can and to listen carefully to others. Further up the school, questioning supports pupils to reflect on and refine their ideas and responses. Many are able to provide sophisticated explanations, making use of their well-developed vocabulary to do so.
- Teaching assistants are skilled and deployed well. They make a strong contribution to the progress made by the pupils they support because they know them very well and focus on building their independence and resilience. For example, in a Year 3 and 4 literacy lesson, the teaching assistant was working with a small group of less-able pupils. Her careful questioning ensured that they thought for themselves and drew their own conclusions.
- Teachers provide clear, helpful written and oral feedback regularly so that pupils know precisely what they have to do to improve. Written feedback is frequently referred to in class, to remind pupils of what they are aiming to develop. The regular oral feedback that is a feature of all lessons seen during the inspection ensures that any misconceptions are tackled very quickly and pupils' progress is not impeded.
- All parents who responded to the online questionnaire agree that their children are well taught.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The ethos of caring for others permeates the school and its work on a daily basis. Consequently, a feature of this school is how caring pupils are to one another. For example, when asked who they would speak to if they had a problem, they said that they could speak to any member of staff, or to older pupils. Year 5 and 6 pupils see it as their responsibility to look after the younger ones. At the end of a meeting with inspectors, unasked, a Year 5 boy took the hands of two early years children and told them he would take them back to their classroom. They went with him very happily.
- Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning ensure that they make rapid and sustained progress across the curriculum. They are very clear about the importance of their education and say that learning in their school is fun. They are resilient and have the confidence to 'have a go', even if they are unsure, because they know

that getting things wrong sometimes helps them to learn.

- Pupils have many opportunities to take on extra responsibilities. There is a very active school council and many belong to the 'playground squad' who organise and oversee games for younger children at breaktimes. In addition, pupils plan and run lunchtime clubs that meet the interests of their peers. Pupils say there is always a club they want to go to. Consequently, these are well-attended and enjoyed.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations and how to recognise risk. They spoke of visitors to the school who talked to them about safety, as well as visits they made to further develop their understanding.
- Pupils say there is no bullying in this school. When asked by inspectors, there was a chorus of, 'No way!' One pupil expanded on this to explain that, 'People are nice to each other in this school, that's what it's about here.' This is reflected in the school's entirely empty bullying log.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour is impeccable around the school at all times of the day. They are respectful of each other and of staff. In this school pupils are actively kind to each other on a daily basis.
- Inspectors noted that pupils are extremely proud of their school, their achievements and those of others. They speak of how the school has helped them and how happy they are to be here.
- Leaders record and monitor any incidents of poor behaviour. However, these are very infrequent and decreasing further. The very few pupils who do misbehave are helped through a behaviour plan. Records show that these are highly effective.
- Attendance has improved since 2014 and is now well above the national average. This is because the school has rigorous processes to follow up any absence. Pupils are very keen to achieve the individual and class attendance rewards.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- In this small school, a single instance of slower progress has a significant impact on published outcomes that measure by percentage. However, nearly all pupils make good and often outstanding progress from their starting points. Consequently, attainment by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is well above the national average.
- Rates of progress for disabled pupils or those with special educational needs across the school compare favourably with those of other pupils, with some making exceptional progress from their starting points. This is as a result of the rapid identification of additional needs, creative use of targeted additional support and very close monitoring of impact.
- By the end of Year 6 the rates of progress made by the very small number of disadvantaged pupils is better than that made by other pupils nationally and in line with that made by other pupils in the school. However, lower starting points mean that attainment in 2015 for these pupils was below that of other pupils in the school.
- Children enter the early years from a range of settings and with differing levels of development which fluctuate each year. Many have good levels of physical development but have less well-developed literacy skills. The school has organised early years provision to tackle this, with a focus on developing literacy skills as quickly as possible. Consequently, children make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have recently moved to an assessment system designed to underpin the new primary curriculum. This is enabling them to monitor progress across all year groups and to identify where they may need to address gaps as a result of the greater demands of the new curriculum. Consequently, information is not comparable to that from previous years as it is measuring different things. Nonetheless, inspectors were provided with abundant evidence of rapid rates of progress for current pupils across the curriculum through observations of learning and scrutiny of pupils' books. As a result, the proportion of pupils in each year group on track to meet age-related expectations is higher than might be expected at this point of the school year.
- The most-able pupils make at least good progress in all year groups. This is because teachers' planning ensures that they are stretched and challenged in all subjects. The six-weekly checks on pupils' progress ensure that action is taken very quickly if any pupil, including the most able, show signs of falling behind.

Early years provision

is good

- Since the last inspection the environment in the well-led early years provision has been much improved. The outdoor space is now accessible all year round and is well-resourced. There are well-organised areas so that children can access activities independently and they are encouraged to select additional resources to support their learning.
- Children settle in quickly and good relationships with parents are established from the start. Behaviour is good because the early years leader ensures that routines and expectations are established quickly and children understand these. As a result, children rapidly learn to play and work together harmoniously and to demonstrate good manners in their dealings with others. For example, in group work observed by an inspector, children were sharing activity resources sensibly and remembering to say 'please' and 'thank you'. They are keen to earn rewards for their good behaviour.
- Teaching is good. There is a good balance of child-led and adult-led activities that provides coverage of all areas of the early years curriculum. Adult-led activities are well-matched to children's abilities through effective additional support for the less able and carefully planned resources to challenge the most able. As a result, children are well-prepared for Year 1.
- Nearly all children make good progress, particularly in mathematics. Although progress in literacy is slower, particularly for boys, this is now being tackled effectively through the daily teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) and increasing the time made available to hearing children read. The recent introduction of active learning strategies is having a positive impact on engaging boys with literacy.
- Children's personal development is very well-supported. A daily guided discussion about their family lives ensures that they understand and show respect for different types of families, different opinions and different religions. Even the youngest children are involved in voting for school council members.
- The early years provision is a combination of reception-age children and Year 1 pupils. Although this structure was established for clear and cogent reasons, it nonetheless represents a challenge for the early years leader. This is particularly the case in the first half of the school year when it is important that the youngest children have ready access to a wide range of opportunities to learn through play, while Year 1 pupils become acclimatised to more formal learning. The development of discrete areas within the classroom for different aspects of the early years curriculum, including creative activities, is a priority, alongside improving the use of phonic prompts.

School details

Unique reference number	123472
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10001264

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Sobczak
Headteacher	Mandy Jones
Telephone number	01691 690207
Website	www.criftings.shropshire.sch.uk
Email address	admin@criftings.shropshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 February 2011

Information about this school

- The current headteacher was appointed just over two years ago.
- This is a much smaller than average primary school.
- Children attend the early years provision in the Reception class on a full-time basis.
- Most pupils are White British and speak English.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in eight lessons and made a number of short visits to lessons with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and her senior teacher; class teachers, including newly qualified teachers; the leader of the early years; members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector also spoke to the diocesan adviser for the school by telephone and spoke informally with a group of parents.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised safeguarding documents and practices, policies, monitoring records, minutes of meetings, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans and samples of pupils' work.
- The views of 38 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, alongside views gathered from parents by the school and letters written to inspectors by parents.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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