

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



28 November 2016

Mrs Joanne Millett  
Headteacher  
The Croft Primary School  
Rugeley Road  
Armitage  
Rugeley  
Staffordshire  
WS15 4AZ

Dear Mrs Millett

### **Short inspection of The Croft Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 17 November 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in March 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You provide informed and capable leadership. You have a well-judged understanding of what constitutes effective teaching and learning and have ensured that the quality of teaching across the school has remained strong. You share out leadership responsibilities in a sensible and proportionate way so that everyone's skills are used to good effect.

Under your leadership, good academic standards have been maintained and standards in reading have forged ahead. You and your staff have also strengthened some other aspects of the school's work, such as pupils' participation and achievement in sport and music. At your school, pupils of all abilities are able to experience feelings of success. Nevertheless, within this good school, some pupils could still reach higher standards in mathematics and writing.

Leaders have tackled the recommendation from the previous inspection to improve marking. However, teachers could still do more to increase the level of challenge provided to the most able pupils in mathematics.

Your staff report that they feel valued and supported in their work. Parents comment positively on the quality of education provided and pupils are happy and motivated. School routines operate smoothly, pupils behave very well and

attendance is above average. Of the 61 parents who responded to Parent View, 97% would recommend the school to other parents.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's procedures for keeping pupils safe are fit for purpose. All the proper checks on staff and visitors are carried out correctly and records are kept up to date and stored securely. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to act on any information that causes concern about pupils' safety or welfare matters. While such instances have been very few, key information is readily available in the staffroom should it be required. In addition, there are several notices around the school that remind adults and pupils about what to do if they have any worries or problems. First-aid treatment is administered promptly when required and any medicines in school are stored appropriately.

In class, teachers prompt pupils to think about what they would do in order to stay safe in certain situations. In key stage 2, for example, older pupils had recently been asked to consider how they would act in response to situations that might arise when using the internet. Across the school, pupils of all ages learn how to manage everyday risks, such as when riding a bike or crossing the road. They also learn and think about the harmful effects of different types of bullying. Pupils who spoke with me explained that instances of bullying are uncommon at Croft Primary and added that, if it were to happen, adults would stop it.

The school governors operate a safeguarding committee, which meets regularly. This committee takes note of current guidance and requirements and also seeks the views of staff and pupils. Records from such meetings show that pupils have been asked about safety matters and whether they have any concerns about safety at school. In a similar vein, the headteacher's termly report to governors always includes a section about safety, behaviour and safeguarding matters. Through this mix of formal and informal routines, governors and staff ensure that the importance of keeping children safe is kept in everyone's minds.

### **Inspection findings**

- In the years since the previous inspection, you have continued to provide steady, capable and thoughtful leadership. You and the senior management team keep a keen eye on the quality of teaching. You give supportive and developmental feedback to staff, organise training when necessary and share out responsibilities in an effective way. Everyone feels part of a successful team.
- Pupils, too, feel a sense of success at Croft Primary School. This a key factor in motivating them to play a full part in school life, respect others and do their best. During this inspection, a thoroughly worthwhile assembly was observed that captured much of this flavour of your school. The achievements of staff and pupils were acknowledged, the link between effort and reward was exemplified and excellence was applauded. It was an uplifting experience, led with good-humoured and courteous discipline, which served to illustrate and reinforce the very decent values that your school promotes.

- Children's levels of knowledge and skill on entry to school vary from one year to the next, which is reflected in the fluctuating statistics for the proportions reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year. Nevertheless, the majority of children settle in quickly, make good progress across the early years and are well prepared for learning in key stage 1. This is because adults in the Reception class provide clear guidance, help children to develop positive attitudes to school and teach them well. Efficient communication with home also assists this smooth start to school. Parents who spoke with me during the inspection drew particular attention to this aspect. They described staff as highly visible and approachable. Indeed, at the beginning of the day, when pupils and parents were waiting for school to start, I noticed that teachers were outside and available to talk with parents.
- This good start leads on to good progress across key stages 1 and 2. Progress in reading is particularly strong and, year after year, standards have been above average at the end of both key stages. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the school operates a systematic and efficient approach to the teaching of reading. In the early years and across key stage 1, teachers focus heavily on developing pupils' early reading skills. Pupils have access to some high-quality resources, and the teaching of phonics is well organised and effective. This has resulted in yearly improvements in the proportions of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Secondly, there is a very positive culture of reading, both for pleasure and as part of learning, across the whole curriculum. Put simply, pupils are inspired to read. An amusing school display includes photographs of pupils reading in unusual places and pupils regularly post book reviews about stories they have enjoyed. Pupils of all ages can talk about favourite authors and how they recommend books to one another. Teachers expect all pupils to read at home and in school, and they keep a watchful eye on this to make sure these good habits do not slip.
- Parents value this attention to reading and have recently raised funds for the purchase of new books. Pupils who read to me during this inspection did so with fluency and enjoyment. They also talked with informed enthusiasm about the new books in the library and the various school activities that promote interest in reading and books.
- In writing and mathematics, standards are not quite as high as those seen in reading. When I looked into this, I discovered that the most recent assessment information shows that girls are ahead of boys in the quality of their writing. It also shows that, while most pupils reach the expected standard for their age in mathematics, the most able pupils do not reach the same high standard as they do in reading or, and to a lesser extent, in writing. You and your staff are aware of this. Your school improvement plans, which focus on these two key areas, are already under way. For instance, teachers are now putting more thought into ways of motivating boys to write. In Year 6, for example, a modern history theme was being used to generate ideas for persuasive writing about the benefits of new inventions. Work in pupils' books shows that boys are producing some lengthy and interesting pieces of writing and that standards are moving upwards.

- In mathematics, teaching is clear and precise. By and large, mathematics equipment is used to good effect and teachers' subject knowledge is good. Teachers plan activities that focus on key mathematical vocabulary and concepts, such as place value. Even so, learning time in class is not always used to best effect. In the main, the middle-ability pupils and those who need extra help with their learning are kept productively occupied and make strides forwards in their understanding. The progress for the most able, however, is not so swift. Here and there, some of the brighter pupils mark time because they are waiting for others to catch up. On other occasions, they get side-tracked by clerical tasks or aspects of presentation that, while important, do not assist their learning and take up too much valuable learning time. There is no suggestion that these pupils are falling behind. In fact, their achievement in mathematics is good, but it could be better.
- Disadvantaged pupils of all abilities achieve very well at Croft Primary. Numbers are small, so care needs to be taken when interpreting statistics. Nevertheless, it is true to say that the progress made by these pupils has been consistently strong in reading and in line with the progress made by other pupils nationally in writing and mathematics. In keeping with the general pattern described earlier, the most able pupils in this group achieve highly in reading, but this is not matched in mathematics.
- You and your staff place a high priority on pupils' achievement in English and mathematics. You ensure that, by the time they leave at the end of Year 6, pupils have acquired the key literacy and numeracy skills they need. In addition to this strong academic core, you also aim to provide a broad and interesting curriculum. You are successful in this aim. Along corridors and on classroom walls, many colourful displays are testimony to the range of subjects and memorable activities on offer. In key stage 1, a sparkling display about space and rockets immediately grabs attention and records some super work. In other parts of the school, it is clear from displays and pupils' work that history is taught and enriched in lively and inventive ways. As part of a current project about the second world war, for example, older pupils have designed and built suitcases for evacuees. Elsewhere, pupils who were studying pre-historic Britain were treated to a visit from a 'caveman' and experimented with cave art. All of this paints a picture of a school that looks to develop a range of skills across the whole curriculum and inject a sense of fun too.
- On top of this, music and sport stand out as notable strengths. Pupils sing beautifully and all get the chance to learn to play a musical instrument and to perform. In sport, pupils are able to participate in a range of after-school clubs and competitive events, and have enjoyed some successes. During this inspection, for example, a school athletics team was presented with a shield in recognition of gaining first place at a recent inter-school tournament.
- The school teaches pupils to take responsibility and gives them the chance to have a say in how things are done at school. All the older pupils have to carry out jobs to assist in the smooth running of the school, ranging from helping the younger ones on the playground to manning doors or serving toast at breaktime. As part of a voluntary club, some pupils even put together a school newspaper. These budding journalists manage to turn out a most worthy journal that is genuinely interesting to read and very informative. Again, this is another example

of how the school seeks to provide opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in meaningful ways.

- Pupils are well behaved and attend regularly. Lateness without good reason is rare and almost all wear full school uniform. In lessons, pupils are attentive and responsive to their teachers and work hard. On the playground, they get on well with one another, follow the rules and use the available space very well. Any pupils who find it hard to cope with aspects of school life or who are experiencing problems outside school are able to attend a special nurture group, which helps them to manage their feelings in a constructive way.
- Governors are articulate and on the ball. They have effective systems in place to check on the school's work and are alert to its key strengths and areas needing further development. They are attentive to the advice they receive, supportive of school staff and ambitious for the pupils. They make sure that they receive the right information in the right way so that they can make key decisions from an informed position.
- The majority of parents express positive views about the school. Parents who spoke to me on the playground were full of praise for the quality of education and care provided. Several parents commended the school's work to support pupils who have particular learning or medical needs. As already noted, parents also commented favourably on the quality of communication between home and school. The school's website is up to date, regular newsletters keep parents posted about events, and each class sends out termly information about classroom learning. In addition, staff have run numerous workshops and information events for parents to explain how subjects are taught in school and to provide guidance about how to support learning at home. Parents, and indeed pupils, expressed some mixed views about the use of homework. However, most find it helpful and welcome it.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching in mathematics enables the most able pupils to make the best use of the time available in lessons
- they keep a close eye on the impact of their actions to raise the standard of boys' writing, and build upon or refine their approach as necessary.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and your teaching staff. I also met with the school administrator and three governors and had a telephone conversation with a local authority officer. I carried out short observations of teaching in all classes, looked at pupils' work and attended a whole-school assembly. I met with a group of pupils and listened to some pupils read. I also talked with pupils in lessons, on the playground and in the dining hall. In addition, I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day.

I paid particular attention to several key lines of enquiry. These included the effectiveness of phonics teaching, achievement in reading and the level of challenge provided to the most able pupils. Other lines of enquiry related to aspects of leadership, assessment and safeguarding.

By the end of the inspection, there were 61 recent responses on Parent View and 40 written comments. I took account of these and talked with pupils about how school staff listened to their views. I looked at a number of documents, including pupils' progress information, the school's own evaluation of its performance, information about the work of the governing body, records of leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning, and several school policy documents. I also checked the school's website and the procedures for keeping pupils safe. I asked members of staff and parents about safeguarding matters.