

Crook Primary School

Croft Avenue, Crook, County Durham DL15 8QG

Inspection dates

8–9 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders are ambitious, have vision and have succeeded in driving forward improvements in teaching and the curriculum.
- Governance is a major strength of the school. Governors complement their unfailing dedication with an impressive range of skills to both challenge and support school leaders.
- Professional support and training that leaders provide to teachers ensures that the quality of teaching is constantly improving.
- The rich curriculum switches pupils onto learning through varied international links, Shakespeare projects and extensive physical education.
- Teachers are quick to learn from each other and are constantly refining their skills. They know their pupils well and pull out all the stops to ensure that pupils in their classes thrive.
- The newly acquired Nursery now provides high-quality education for children.
- Through the early years, children learn the essential skills to enable them to make confident strides in their learning when they reach Year 1.
- Pupils behave well, concentrate well in lessons and have good manners at all times.
- Bullying is rare and pupils are confident there is a caring adult to confide in if they feel unsafe for any reason.
- Outcomes for pupils are good. However, most-able pupils are not always challenged well and so could reach higher standards.
- Achievement in writing lags a little behind reading and mathematics in some year groups.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment further so that:
 - the most able pupils are given challenging work which enables them to reach higher standards
 - pupils are moved on more quickly in mathematics if they are already confident with a skill.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing in upper key stage 2 so that pupils can:
 - use a range of vocabulary in their writing
 - use and apply their good spelling, punctuation and grammar in extended writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and her senior team lead with energy, vision and commitment. They do all they can to reduce workload and ensure teachers spend their time on what really makes a difference. The support and mentoring they give to teachers who are at the early stages in their careers is exceptional: 'Second to none,' as one teacher put it. Consequently, morale is high among staff.
- A good programme of professional development helps middle leaders hone their skills. They use data well to diagnose what could be improved and hold teachers to account through regular meetings with them. They give good quality feedback to teachers who, in turn, constantly improve their practice.
- Self-evaluation is honest and accurate. Leaders have identified the right areas for improvement. They communicate these to all staff and hold regular meetings to make sure everything is going in the right direction.
- The curriculum is vibrant and engaging. All pupils experience the world of Shakespeare through lessons which explore rich language and drama. Inspectors observed pupils, many of whom had a history of challenging behaviour, captivated as they explored act 4 scene 3 of 'Julius Caesar'. Moreover, visits to Stratford-upon-Avon, places of worship and museums bring learning alive for pupils.
- Improvements have been made to the mathematics and science curriculum. Achievement in these subjects is improving strongly although the improvements are still being embedded across the school. In science, more experiments are now developing pupils' scientific skills well and increased opportunities to solve problems are improving pupils' mathematical development.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported well both in class and when working in small groups and so additional funding is used well.
- The pupil premium is having a strong impact on learning for disadvantaged pupils currently in the school. This is apparent in their improved skills, particularly in mathematics and reading.
- The physical education (PE) and sport funding is making a positive difference to pupils' health and their enjoyment of PE. All pupils now receive two hours of PE per week, one of which is taught by a specialist teacher and the other by their class teacher who benefits from training provided from the PE specialist.
- The local authority has supported the school well, for example through the introduction of Nursery provision and help to improve attendance.

Governance of the school

- Members of the governing body have skills which cover financial management, local government, the police service and school improvement. As such, they provide invaluable support as well as challenge to school leaders.

- Governors receive high-quality information on pupils' achievement on a regular basis. Their excellent skills mean that they are able to look beyond headline data to scrutinise achievement of different groups of pupils in detail.
- In turn, the governing body has a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Rather than dwelling on the many things the school does well, governors are upfront about what needs improving further.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Policies, systems and procedures are high quality and kept up to date. Training for staff is provided regularly and updates are circulated to staff frequently so that they are fully aware of current requirements.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school, where the safety of pupils is a shared responsibility. Particularly effective are the monthly meetings where a representative from each year group attends so that all staff are aware of any possible concerns. This enables a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to keeping children safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers are dedicated and have good subject knowledge. They constantly improve their skills through the well-designed programme of training and, consequently, the quality of teaching in the school is rising rapidly.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of teaching, making comments such as: 'teachers go that extra mile' and 'they put the children first and are very attentive to children's needs'.
- Pupils who need additional support or have vulnerabilities which affect their learning have their needs well met. 'Nurture' provision in very small groups, which is sometimes taught in a cosy wooden hut, has a good impact on improving pupils' behaviour and mental health. This, in turn, has a positive effect on their learning.
- Good-quality training has ensured that the teaching of phonics in key stage 1 is strong and improving. This is leading to pupils being able to link sounds to symbols with more fluency than before, thus making a positive impact on writing in key stage 1.
- Teachers use their assessment information well to identify next steps in learning for pupils. This means they know their pupils well and are able to plan activities for them that challenge them well. However, the most able sometimes finish work earlier and have to wait for others to catch up, or the work is sometimes too easy for them.
- Mathematics teaching has improved since the new curriculum was introduced in September 2017. This is leading to increased rates of progress. However, pupils who are confident with a skill are not moved on quickly enough and this limits the progress they are making.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View said that their children are happy at the school. One typical comment was: 'This is such a lovely school, amazing community spirit, teachers who genuinely care about the children and parents.'
- Pupils say bullying is rare but that there is always an adult to turn to should the need arise. They have a good understanding of most forms of bullying.
- Through the 'mini police', a project initiated through Durham Constabulary, pupils are helped to understand such issues as water safety and road safety.
- Some pupils become 'e-cadets', promoting online safety and awareness of potential dangers of using the internet. Pupils who were questioned by inspectors showed a good understanding of how to stay safe online.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are developed well. There is an active 'children's leadership team' that enables pupils to democratically have their say in daily school life. Visits to places of worship help pupils to explore religions and cultures other than their own. International links broaden pupils' horizons significantly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View and those who were spoken to by inspectors said that they were happy with behaviour in the school.
- In class, pupils usually apply themselves well to work. Only occasionally, when the teaching is repetitive or does not interest them, do some switch off and lose concentration.
- Inspectors found pupils to be polite and well mannered. At lunchtime, they chat sensibly over their meals. Outside, they play with good consideration for others around them. The school is litter-free and pupils wear their uniform proudly.
- Attendance is improving and is now average. Working closely with families and outside agencies, school leaders are doing all they can to reduce persistent absence from a minority of pupils. Persistent absence is above average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2017, pupils at the end of Year 6 reached above-average standards in reading and broadly average standards in mathematics and writing. The progress they had made over time was above average in reading and below average in writing and mathematics.
- Inspection evidence shows that pupils currently in the school are making faster progress in mathematics. This is the result of pupils becoming more fluent in how to add, subtract, multiply and divide. Moreover, they are more confident in using their mathematics skills to solve problems.

- High standards and strong progress in reading are being maintained. This is the result of a focus in lessons on not only how to read words and sentences, but on developing pupils' comprehension skills. Additionally, pupils' study of Shakespeare texts has helped them to engage with and love literature from an early age.
- In writing, standards in upper key stage 2 are lower than in reading and mathematics. This is because pupils sometimes use a narrow range of vocabulary or do not apply their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills to their writing. However, writing skills are progressing well in other year groups.
- Standards are rising in key stage 1. A drive to improve literacy has paid dividends. This is apparent in pupils' reading skills and in the rising number of pupils on track to meet the required standard in the year 1 phonics screening check.
- Pupils' outcomes in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics are good. Science, history, geography, religious education, PE, art and music are all taught regularly. Through these subjects, pupils are able to apply their English and mathematics skills as well as learn subject-specific skills. For example, pupils learned about the cubist style of the Brazilian painter Romero Britto in an art lesson.
- In previous years, weaker teaching meant that disadvantaged pupils made less progress than their classmates. This is no longer the case because the school's tracking is sharp and highlights those pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Leaders are quick to address these issues. This means the pupil premium is having a stronger impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities made as much progress as others.
- In 2017, the progress of most-able pupils was weaker than other ability groups. Inspection evidence shows that the most able pupils currently in the school are now making faster progress but they are capable of reaching higher standards, particularly in mathematics and writing.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership of the early years has been effective in driving up standards in the Nursery. By the time children start in Reception they are far more advanced in terms of speech and language and personal and social skills than before. These improvements have been brought about by a more effective curriculum, better training for staff and high-quality assessments, which identify children's next steps accurately.
- Phonics is taught well and by the time children start in Year 1, this means they are well prepared for the demands to come. Adults model the correct way to hold a pencil and form letters correctly. Most adults have good questioning skills, enabling children to improve their speaking skills by answering in full sentences and using a wider range of vocabulary as time goes on. Children are challenged well, including the most able.
- Adults know children well and so they are able to design activities that stimulate their interests. They intervene sensitively and promptly to correct any errors or misconceptions in learning.

- Additional funding for disadvantaged children and for those who have SEN and/or disabilities is used well to provide extra support when needed. These pupils are making good progress and so the funding is making a positive difference.
- Outcomes for children are good across all areas of learning. A growing proportion of children are exceeding the early learning goals.
- Children behave well. They enjoy their learning and they willingly share equipment and toys with each other. Routines are followed well by children and this means that on a day-to-day basis, the early years classes run smoothly.

School details

Unique reference number	114056
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10048997

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	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	444
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Tomlinson
Headteacher	Antonella Lupton
Telephone number	01388 762400
Website	www.crookprimary.org.uk
Email address	crookprimary@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	26 March 2012

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities on its website.
- In September 2016, the school opened a 78-place Nursery unit which was previously a separate school. In the Nursery, there are 13 places, offering 30 hours of provision for children.
- Two deputy headteachers have joined the senior leadership team in the past 18 months. Within this period, one assistant headteacher was appointed and another returned from a period of secondment.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is above average. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.

- Most pupils are of White British heritage and so the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language or who are from minority ethnic groups is below the national average.
- The school is a hub school for the Royal Shakespeare Company, taking part in numerous festivals and events alongside the company.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons. Joint observations took place with senior leaders. Inspectors listened to some pupils reading and looked at the work in pupils' books to evaluate their progress over time. They spoke to pupils, staff, parents, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised various documents including the summary of self-evaluation, governance documents, safeguarding information, and the tracking of pupils' progress.
- Inspectors considered the 51 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View and 32 responses to the staff questionnaire. The school's website was also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Robert Jones, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Andy Jones	Ofsted Inspector
Gillian Nimer	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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