

West Croft School

Coronation Road, Bideford, Devon EX39 3DE

Inspection dates

15–16 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- While standards overall have declined since the last inspection, standards in reading and writing in 2017 improved and were close to the national averages. However, pupils' progress in mathematics at key stage 2 was slow and below national expectations.
- Until recently, governors did not hold school leaders sufficiently to account for the progress being made by pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement declined. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are too low.
- Leaders have identified that teachers need to provide greater challenge for the most able pupils in mathematics at key stage 2.
- The curriculum does not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to learn about other faiths. This does not help to prepare them well for life in a multi-faith society.
- Subject leaders do not have a comprehensive understanding of how pupils are achieving in their subjects across the school.
- Rates of attendance have fallen below national averages since the previous inspection. New initiatives introduced by the school have reversed this decline.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level for phonics in Year 1 improved in 2017 but was still below the national average.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed headteacher has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. She has acted quickly to address weaknesses. The actions taken have led to rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and rising standards across the school.
- Recent external support has helped to improve leadership, including governance, and the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Many pupils across the school are engaging with the increased challenges provided by their teachers.
- Pupils are polite and caring. They are proud of their school and feel safe and well cared for.
- Effective early years provision enables children to make a positive start and achieve good progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of some key areas of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - governors effectively monitor the impact of the school’s use of additional funding to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
 - the curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of other faiths so that they are better prepared for life in a multi-faith society
 - subject leaders develop a stronger view of the quality of the provision and outcomes for their subjects across the school
 - subject leaders hold teachers to account for the progress made by pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities
 - leaders continue to develop initiatives that reduce the rates of persistent absence so that attendance for all groups of pupils is in line with, or higher than, national averages.
- Raise pupils’ achievements in mathematics at key stage 2 by ensuring that:
 - teachers use accurate assessments to help them plan the next steps in pupils’ learning
 - mathematics tasks challenge the most able pupils so that a greater proportion achieve the higher level
 - teachers provide pupils with opportunities to use their mathematical skills in subjects across the curriculum.
- Ensure that the strong progress made by children in the early years in reading is built upon effectively so that a higher proportion of Year 1 pupils achieve the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The recently appointed headteacher has acted swiftly and effectively to address priorities for improving the school. She makes sure that leaders are aware of the range of improvements needed to ensure that the school offers a good quality of education for its pupils. Leaders have established appropriate plans to achieve this.
- Leaders and governors have begun to address the decline in the quality of teaching and the outcomes achieved by pupils since the previous inspection. While these aspects still require improvement, rapid progress can be seen across the school. Leaders have not shied away from making challenging decisions and staff have embraced the higher aspirations for school improvement. All staff who responded to the online questionnaire agreed that leadership was effective and that they are proud to work at the school.
- The local authority acted swiftly when their monitoring reports showed that the school was in decline. The local authority challenged the school to make urgent improvements and this resulted in the appointment of a new headteacher who restructured school leadership and arranged additional training for governors. Recent monitoring reports from local authority officers are accurate and they recognise the school's improved leadership and management.
- New systems have been introduced for tracking the progress being made by pupils. Leaders correctly identified that the previous systems were not used effectively to monitor the progress being made by specific groups of pupils, including the most able. This resulted in teachers not acting quickly enough to help pupils when they were falling behind in their learning. The new systems are requiring teachers to assess the progress of pupils more closely and to identify any gaps in their learning. Leaders acknowledge that teachers in key stage 2 could use this information more effectively to move the most able pupils on more quickly in mathematics.
- Subject leaders have had few opportunities to gain a clear understanding of how pupils are achieving in their subjects across the school. This is being addressed so that leaders can have a greater impact and raise standards of achievement across the curriculum. Leaders also understand the need to hold teachers to account for the progress being made by all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The curriculum offers a range of experiences that enhance pupils' learning. However, there is an inconsistent degree of curriculum coverage across the school. For example, subject leaders are aware that there are few examples of pupils' outcomes in science in some classes. Leaders have not ensured that pupils are taught about a range of faiths and this does not prepare pupils well for the next stage in their education or for life in a multicultural society.
- The curriculum is enhanced by a good selection of after-school clubs and by visits to places of interest. Pupils in Year 6 recently enjoyed a virtual journey through the solar system at Bristol Planetarium as a stimulus for their project on space. They used their scientific knowledge to create short films, enhanced by their own atmospheric music, backgrounds and props. Year 6 pupils spoke articulately about the British democratic

system and described how the school helps them to consider the opinions of others and to recognise when people are expressing extreme views.

- The sport premium funding is used effectively and enables pupils to take part in a wide range of physical education and sporting activities. An increasing proportion of pupils are joining after-school clubs.
- School leaders make sure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive appropriate support and this ensures that these pupils make good progress.
- Leaders have acted effectively to improve rates of attendance and to reduce the high levels of persistent absence. However, attendance rates are still below national averages and improving attendance remains a priority for the school.

Governance of the school

- Until recently, school governors were not provided with sufficiently detailed information about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in order for them to effectively monitor the impact of the school's work. Consequently, the quality of teaching and the outcomes achieved by pupils declined since the previous inspection. This has changed since the appointment of the new headteacher. Governors now have a wealth of information and they are using this to challenge school leaders and to inform their monitoring of the school's performance.
- Governors acknowledge that they do not have a firm understanding of the impact of the school's use of additional funding provided to help disadvantaged pupils. While these pupils are making sound progress, leaders are unable to identify which interventions are the most successful.
- The governing body has acted effectively to address the recommendations of a recent review of governance. As a result, the governing body is now focused on the school's key priorities, such as the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Governors have also undertaken appropriate training, which is ensuring that each member of the governing body uses their expertise more effectively than in the past.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a culture of safeguarding in the school and all members of staff know that it is their first priority to keep pupils safe. Staff know the pupils well and take great care to make sure that all welfare needs are met. This includes working with other agencies to ensure that any concerns are quickly addressed and the best support is provided.
- Appropriate checks are made to make sure that all staff are suitable to work with children, and staff are clear about the procedures to follow should they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. Good systems are in place to check that all staff have up-to-date safeguarding training.
- The school provides guidance for parents and carers on safety issues, and parents believe that their children are safe when at school. Pupils know how to stay safe, including when they are online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Governors and the local authority report that the quality of teaching has varied considerably across the school since the previous inspection. There has not been enough effective teaching to help pupils make at least good progress and reach higher standards in mathematics by the time they leave Year 6. As a result, pupils' progress in 2016 and 2017 was below the national average for mathematics, particularly the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level. Current indications show that standards are rising, with a higher proportion of pupils working at greater depth in the subject.
- Until recently, the most able pupils in key stage 2 were not suitably challenged to reach the higher levels in mathematics. Currently, while some of the most able pupils are being challenged more effectively, which is leading to rising standards, leaders agree that, overall, the most able pupils could be moved on to more challenging tasks sooner or start lessons at a higher level of expectation. Parents are aware of the higher expectations since the recent change in leadership. One parent commented, 'My children are now working at a pace that is appropriate for them.'
- Leaders are monitoring teaching more closely and taking action when it is not good enough. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving and teachers have much higher expectations. Currently, pupils are taking more pride in the presentation of their work than was the case at the start of the academic year.
- Leaders identified that teachers were not using ongoing assessment information to plan effectively for the next steps in pupils' learning. They introduced new assessment procedures to address this. As a result, teachers are now able to identify gaps in pupils' learning and plan suitable interventions to help pupils make more rapid progress.
- Teachers have acted effectively to raise standards of writing throughout the school, including the ability of pupils to use grammar, punctuation and spelling accurately whenever they write. High-quality writing is celebrated on displays and in pupils' workbooks, and a greater proportion of pupils are writing at higher levels in both key stages.
- Teachers understand that a similar improvement is required in mathematics. Leaders have provided good-quality training for teachers and teaching assistants that has improved subject knowledge across the school.
- All teachers use the school's newly agreed policy for giving feedback to pupils and pupils said that this helps them to move forward in their learning. One pupil commented: 'I was reluctant to edit my work at the start of the year. I now realise that it is making it better. I want it to be the best it can be!'
- Teaching assistants are managed well and they provide effective support for pupils. They play an important role in all classes and particularly in supporting disadvantaged pupils, who make up a third of the school's population. During the inspection, teaching assistants effectively helped disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 to address the challenge of learning three different approaches to solving number problems. They used their expertise to encourage the pupils to find answers for themselves and to select increasingly difficult tasks. One pupil, who confidently chose to use a number line approach, commented, 'This is my chosen method. I could also use sticks and dots or known facts!'

- Pupils typically show very positive attitudes to learning in lessons and they enjoy the interesting activities provided by their teachers. On occasion, however, pupils disengage with their tasks when teachers have not noticed that they do not fully understand what they have to do.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are happy to talk about their work and have a good understanding of how to be effective learners. A number of pupils described the school as a very close, happy family. One pupil noted, 'We have a strong bond. We are all glued together!'
- Pupils know how to stay safe in and out of school, including when online, because of the effective guidance they receive. They gave inspectors sensible advice on how to stay safe while using computers or other mobile technology.
- Pupils have a deep awareness of issues related to bullying. One pupil reflected, 'When people bully, they probably have a problem of their own.' Another added, 'Once you've gone deeper, you can find something nice in all people!' They report that there is very little bullying of any sort at school and that staff act quickly to resolve any issues.
- Pupils' cultural development is underdeveloped because they have limited knowledge and understanding of the range of faiths found in Britain's multicultural society.

Behaviour

- Pupils' behaviour throughout the school is good and this is supported by the views of parents and by the school's behaviour records. These records show that there are a few pupils who have challenging behaviour but effective support is helping them to mature and play a fuller role in the life of the school.
- School leaders have taken action to address the school's recent high rates of persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Parents have been given information about the importance of regular attendance and the school has supported families where persistent absence has been an issue. As a result of these actions, current attendance rates are improving. However, rates of persistent absence are still above national averages for certain groups. This remains a priority for the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' achievements in mathematics have fallen since the previous inspection. Progress in mathematics at key stage 2 fell from average in 2016 to below average in 2017. In 2017, the 41 middle-attaining pupils achieved below the national averages for pupils reaching the expected standard and those reaching the higher level. Outcomes were also below average for this group in reading but above average in writing.
- Leaders have taken steps to improve outcomes in mathematics. Current school

progress information shows that standards are rising, particularly for middle-attaining pupils. However, overall standards in mathematics are still below average.

- In 2017, key stage 1 pupils achieved outcomes in reading and mathematics that were close to the national averages. Almost a third of pupils reached greater depth in reading, with a quarter reaching the higher level in mathematics. However, in writing, outcomes were below the national average, with few pupils reaching greater depth.
- Leaders have ensured that the lower writing outcomes in key stage 1 have been addressed. There is good evidence to show that the strong progress made in writing in the early years is being built upon in Years 1 and 2. Outcomes in pupils' writing books show rising standards, with more pupils working at greater depth.
- In 2016, a quarter of the most able pupils in key stage 2 reached the higher level in mathematics. This improved in 2017, with more than half reaching the higher level. However, fewer of the most able pupils achieved the expected level than seen nationally. Leaders are aware of the need to continue to challenge all pupils to achieve the standards they are capable of, including the most able.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making more rapid progress because they are strongly supported by their teachers and by teaching assistants. Over time, both groups of pupils have progressed at similar rates to others with similar starting points. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils made stronger progress in writing and mathematics than other pupils and similar progress in reading in key stage 2. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected levels in reading and mathematics was below the national average. These pupils improved at a good rate but not quickly enough to reach the expected levels.
- Pupils in these groups are given good support that meets their learning and behaviour needs well. During the inspection, inspectors noted that the individual support provided is having a positive impact for these pupils.
- Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum. A good example of this is the recent high-quality writing by Year 6 pupils investigating the Stone Age.
- Pupils enjoy reading and they select from a wide range of books provided by the school. In 2016, less than half of pupils in Year 1 achieved the expected standards in the national phonics screening check. In 2017, 65% of Year 1 pupils reached the expected level. However, this was still significantly below the national average of 81%. Leaders have introduced a number of initiatives to improve the teaching of phonics and current assessments show that pupils are making stronger progress. Older pupils have good reading skills and talked enthusiastically about their reading habits and favourite authors.
- Pupils are given opportunities to prepare for the next stage in their education through strong links with their future schools. However, their readiness is hindered by their lack of understanding of the range of different faiths that they are likely to see in wider society.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years leader ensures that assessments of children entering the Nursery Year are accurate and include useful information from parents. Children often enter Nursery with low levels of ability in language, communication and personal and social skills. Teachers ensure that learning activities are tailored to enable children to catch up in these areas.
- Outcomes for the children in Reception are consistently good. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development was close to the national averages in 2016 and 2017. Assessments show that the proportion of children currently working at this level is higher than in the previous year and this was confirmed by checking pupils' progress during the inspection.
- The Nursery and Reception learning environments are lively and inviting, both indoors and outside. Teachers set up areas for investigation that capture the imagination of the children and enable them to use their writing, communication and mathematical skills. For example, children preparing meals in the 'mud kitchen' are encouraged to look at pictures of quarter-full and half-full measuring jugs and practise using their understanding of measures.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress, often from low starting points, because teachers and support staff give them the support that they need. Governors are aware that these children are making good progress. However, they are not sure about which initiatives are the most effective.
- The teaching of phonics in the early years is strong. This enables the children to make strong progress in their letters and sounds so they can read and write simple words. This is supporting them well for their transition into Year 1 and beyond. During the inspection, children in the Nursery Year were fishing balls from a container and reading the phonics sounds written on them. The teaching assistant had made sure that these included sounds that specific children needed to master.
- Children behave well in Nursery and Reception and display good social and moral understanding and development. They quickly learn how to follow instructions given by adults and how to share and listen to the views of others. Their growing spiritual development is shown in their love of learning and willingness to describe their creative work.
- Safeguarding is effective. All adults are clear about agreed procedures and all risk assessments are in place. Children learn how to stay safe and eat healthily.
- Relationships with parents and external agencies are strong and parents feel that they can approach all members of staff should they have concerns.

School details

Unique reference number	113132
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10048146

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	616
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs K Kelly
Headteacher	Susan Wilcock
Telephone number	01237 473 548
Website	www.westcroft.devon.sch.uk
Email address	admin@westcroft.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school was previously inspected as West Croft Junior School in October 2014 and was graded as good for its overall effectiveness. Since the inspection, the school has amalgamated with a neighbouring infant and nursery school but did not form a new school.
- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is average.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector observed learning in lessons with the headteacher. Team inspectors observed learning in lessons, sometimes with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the chair of governors and the leader of mathematics. Additionally, the lead inspector had discussions with pupils, parents, a representative of the local authority and the school's improvement consultant.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, governing body minutes, local authority and school improvement reports, attendance and behaviour records and safeguarding documents.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and observed pupils' behaviour during breaktimes.
- The views of parents were considered from 28 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, from free-text responses and from conversations with parents at the start and end of the school day. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Paul Hodson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Justine Hocking	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Olford	Ofsted Inspector

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