

# Croft Academy

Croft Street, Walsall, West Midlands WS2 8JE

## Inspection dates

27–28 June 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable. It is generally weaker in lower key stage 2 than in the older and younger years.
- Teachers sometimes do not check on pupils' progress thoroughly enough to set work that builds upon what they can already do. Some most-able pupils, in particular, complete work that presents little challenge.
- Feedback to pupils is inconsistent. Pupils sometimes fail to make good use of the feedback they receive, so errors persist.
- The impact of the work done by teaching assistants is too variable.
- In both 2016 and 2017, pupils left key stage 2 having made progress that was well below average in reading and mathematics.
- Since the last inspection, disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well as they should at key stage 2, especially in reading.
- Teachers do not receive good guidance on how to ensure that pupils gain the necessary knowledge and understanding in several non-core subjects. As a result, pupils do not make the progress in these subjects that they should.
- Justifiably, leaders have concentrated on the teaching of English and mathematics. They are aware that several other subjects require more attention.

### The school has the following strengths

- Children get off to a good start in early years. Staff identify rapidly their individual needs. Many children make strong progress from low starting points.
- In early years and key stage 1, phonics is taught well. Pupils make good progress in early reading.
- Staff develop pupils' understanding of themselves and of other people and their cultures effectively. Pupils behave well.
- Plans for improvement are effective. Leaders and governors are well aware of the school's remaining weaknesses.
- The quality of teaching is improving rapidly. In part, this reflects the successful implementation of strategies to enhance the learning of pupils who are disadvantaged or who speak English as an additional language
- Standards at key stage 2 are rising, especially in the older year groups.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, by increasing the consistency with which teachers:
  - assess how well pupils are learning, so that they can set work for pupils, especially the most able, that builds upon what they can already do
  - ensure that pupils have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes.
- Provide pupils with the regular teaching in a broad range of subjects that enables them to make secure gains in the key knowledge and understanding of those subjects.
- Extend the impact of leadership and management on pupils' achievement, by:
  - ensuring that teaching assistants have all the knowledge and skills they require to be successful at all the tasks they perform
  - developing the effective leadership of a wider range of subjects, so that staff receive the necessary guidance on how to teach them effectively.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Senior leaders are acting effectively to address the school's weaknesses. They have set clear expectations for both staff and pupils, so that the school is working as a coherent community. Pupils' self-confidence, attitudes to learning, and behaviour have improved as a result. Teaching is improving rapidly. Standards at key stage 2, while not yet consistently secure, have risen markedly since the last inspection.
- The executive principal began working at the school full time in May 2018 when the former principal relinquished his post. He has a secure knowledge of the school, and its priorities for improvement. His evaluation of the teaching observed during the inspection accorded well with that of the inspectors.
- Leaders have a thorough understanding of how key groups of pupils in the school, such as disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language, learn best. They recognise the importance of pupils' self-esteem and security. Leaders spend the pupil premium effectively to overcome any obstacles and to ensure that teaching takes full account of pupils' starting points and particular needs.
- Teachers assess pupils' attainment in English and mathematics regularly. Leaders use the results to identify those pupils at risk of falling behind. In response, they organise a wide range of additional support to help them to catch up. Teachers check their judgements about pupils' achievement against those made by teachers in other schools in the multi-academy trust.
- Staff, including teachers at a relatively early stage of their careers, told inspectors that the training and coaching that they receive are proving very useful in developing their skills. Inspection evidence confirmed recent improvements, for example in the teaching of mathematics.
- Those who lead the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities do so effectively. Pupils' individual needs are increasingly identified on entry to the school, ensuring that they receive personalised support straight away.
- The school's curriculum is designed primarily to reflect the importance of English and mathematics, and to foster pupils' personal, moral and social development. For example, pupils learn a great deal about a range of cultures, traditions and religions. In line with the school's values, they are encouraged to reflect on their own attitudes and to respect those of others.
- Leaders spend the physical education and sport premium effectively. They use it to enhance the skills of the staff, and to broaden pupils' participation in a range of sporting activities after school. The use of the premium, therefore, dovetails with other initiatives to improve not only pupils' physical health, but also their confidence. Girls in particular have grown in self-esteem.
- Teachers introduce pupils to a wider range of curriculum subjects to broaden their experience and kindle their interest in the world around them. However, some subjects require stronger leadership because teachers do not receive clear guidance about how to teach the knowledge, skills and understanding associated with each subject. As a

result, pupils do not learn in a sufficiently structured way. The assessment of pupils' achievement in many of these subjects is rudimentary.

- The trust supports the school well. In particular, it provides experienced teachers who are able to give intensive and effective professional development for staff.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governance is effective.
- The trust delegates the day-to-day running of the school to a local governing board, which oversees three schools in the local federation. It also shapes the school's direction and values. Since the last inspection, the trust has overhauled the membership of the local board, including through the appointment of a new chair.
- New appointees have brought specialist expertise, for example in education. Governors know the school well, and understand how leaders are addressing the culture of the school to improve outcomes. More recent minutes of local governing board meetings show that the board is now asking probing questions to leaders about standards in the school.
- Governors play their full part in keeping pupils safe, drawing on the trust's procedures. They check that the school meets its obligations when appointing staff, and that staff training is up to date. Governors know the local community well, and the risks that it poses. They make sure that the site is well maintained.
- The trust, through the regional director, ultimately holds leaders to account for the progress of the school. He provides effective coordination for the different strands of the trust's support. The trust ensures that the school works within its budget, and manages the performance of the executive principal.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The staff know the pupils and their diverse backgrounds very well. They understand how their circumstances might affect pupils' welfare and safety. Staff are vigilant, and their regular training makes them well aware of how to identify and report any concerns. Leaders work effectively with parents and carers to protect those pupils who are potentially vulnerable, and persist if the parents are initially wary of the school.
- The school's policies and procedures meet all statutory requirements. Clear and detailed records are stored securely. Leaders work closely and effectively with other agencies involved in the safeguarding of children.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it is inconsistent. Specifically, the quality of teaching varies between year groups, with the strongest teaching in Year 6 and early years, and weakest provision in lower key stage 2. The planning for the teaching of some non-core subjects does not allow pupils to

demonstrate an increasing command of those subjects' key ideas.

- Teachers sometimes do not check carefully enough on the progress pupils are making in lessons, or have demonstrated in their books. As a result, they set work which is not securely based upon what the class, or groups of pupils in the class, already understand. In particular, the most able pupils, on occasion, complete too much work that does not challenge them to think hard.
- Feedback is not consistently effective. Pupils sometimes do not learn from their mistakes or deepen their understanding. In these circumstances, errors recur.
- Teaching assistants work with individual pupils and groups of pupils in the main classroom or outside it. Much is asked of them, and their effectiveness varies. In some circumstances, they are highly effective. At other times, assistants do not structure the activities in ways which help pupils to learn well. On occasion, they do not use language with the precision which would provide an accurate model for pupils to follow.
- The teaching of reading is improving rapidly. Leaders have identified that many pupils lack the breadth of vocabulary which is typical for their age, or have a limited ability to work out what a text might be implying or suggesting. Teachers now teach a wider vocabulary and how to use it, and explicitly develop pupils' ability to infer meanings from a range of texts.
- In mathematics, pupils' presentation of their work is sometimes a little untidy, reducing their ability to work accurately. However, they are now learning mathematics more effectively. Teachers generally make good use of practical equipment to help pupils get to grips with new concepts. They encourage them to explain their ideas and so to reason mathematically.
- Teaching is highly effective in developing pupils' social skills and attitudes. Teachers encourage them to talk at length, and make sure that they listen to each other's views. Pupils who spoke with inspectors identified the importance for them of being able to express an opinion with confidence.
- In both early years and key stage 1, pupils learn phonics well. Teachers check carefully on their understanding, and make sure that their concentration is sustained. They reinforce the initial understanding of letters with associated actions. Those pupils who read to inspectors were able to use their secure phonic knowledge to work out any unfamiliar words.
- Pupils told inspectors that homework helped them with their classwork, although it was not set according to a consistent pattern. The school's reports to parents and carers give a clear picture of pupils' progress.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel very safe in the school. They told the inspectors that bullying occurs only rarely, and that, when it does, they have every confidence that staff will resolve any

issues promptly. Pupils have the opportunity to work and play with very little disturbance.

- The school pays very good attention to the mental and physical health of its pupils, including those who arrive in the school from other parts of the world. Pupils feel that staff support them well, both academically and socially. Some explained how staff had helped to reduce their anxiety. Although some remain a little reserved, pupils explained how the school had increased their confidence, for example, by describing individuals who had overcome adversity.
- The school teaches pupils how to be safe in a number of respects. Pupils learn how to stay safe online, and how to avoid accidents on the road. They appreciate the security of the school site.
- Recently, the school has celebrated both Eid and the Royal Wedding, demonstrating how leaders promote respect for different cultures and traditions. Pupils also learn about the importance of voting and making the right choices, so that British values are well established in the school.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils understand well the school's system for rewarding good behaviour and discouraging unhelpful attitudes.
- Children from early years onwards behave very well at social times. Movement around the school is calm and sensible. In the playground, pupils play happily together. Inspectors saw no instances of aggression.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning in the classroom are consistently positive. There is a willingness, sometimes a passion, to learn. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, the teachers' choice of text and the well-designed activities led to a buzz of excitement in the room. Pupils generally take a pride in their work, and even when the pace of learning slows, disruption is rare.
- The school keeps careful records of poor behaviour, and these show that the occurrence of more serious incidents has declined, reflecting, in particular, improvements to playground facilities. There are very few racist incidents. The school has excluded pupils for a fixed term on four occasions this academic year.
- Staff work hard to establish the importance of coming to school, and to challenge parents when attendance begins to slip. As a result, although a few families have taken extended holidays without the school's consent, pupils' attendance this academic year is broadly in line with the national average for 2016/17.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because the progress of current pupils in English and mathematics, while improving, is not consistently strong. Some differences remain in the attainment of groups of pupils, such as boys and girls. Pupils do not make steady gains in their understanding of a number of non-core subjects.
- In both 2016 and 2017, pupils left Year 6 having made progress in reading and

mathematics which was well below the national average. Progress in writing was below average in 2016, but improved a little in 2017 so that it was within the average range. In both years, the proportion of pupils attaining at a high level in any of the three subjects was low.

- In recent years, the proportion of key stage 1 pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics has been broadly in line with the national average. However, in 2017, no pupils reached greater depth. The proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check was also in line with the proportion seen nationally.
- In the past, the progress that disadvantaged pupils, who make up the majority of many cohorts, have made during their time in key stage 2 has been broadly in line with that of all pupils in the school. However, information supplied by leaders shows that the progress of current disadvantaged pupils in English and mathematics is increasing. Inspection evidence confirmed this. Some gaps remain and disadvantaged pupils are not yet catching up with other pupils nationally.
- Leaders have established a reading culture in the school, and pupils generally read with great enthusiasm, building on their secure phonic knowledge. Older pupils are able to explain their reading preferences in some detail. Reading records show that many, but by no means all, pupils read frequently at home and to an adult in school.
- Observations in lessons and scrutinies of pupils' workbooks show that standards in English and mathematics at key stage 2 are improving and are now approaching those seen nationally. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are learning more quickly, responding well to the teaching strategies designed to address their needs. However, progress is stronger in the older year groups than it is in lower key stage 2. In Years 3 and 4, pupils do not benefit from consistently good teaching.
- The progress of current pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is strong, although a little higher in reading and mathematics than it is in writing. Advances often result from overcoming pupils' emotional and behavioural barriers to learning at an early stage, so that they are able to focus properly on their work.
- The school's approach to the teaching of some subjects, such as science, history and geography, rightly seeks to interest pupils in their environment and to provide them with opportunities to apply their skills in literacy and numeracy. However, teachers pay insufficient attention to the key knowledge and ideas associated with the subjects themselves. For example, pupils do not learn how to work scientifically or how historians use evidence. Inspectors saw some work of a high standard, however, in religious education and personal, social and health education.
- Pupils' increasing self-confidence and rising attainment in reading and mathematics are important contributions to preparing them for secondary school. However, more needs to be done to broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding so that they can get off to a good start in all the subjects that make up the secondary curriculum.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Many children enter Nursery Year or Reception Year with skills and abilities that are below those that are typical for their age, and some are well below. In particular,

children lack communication and language skills. However, inspection evidence shows that, overall, children make good progress, and many with low starting points catch up quickly.

- In recent years, a little more than half the children have attained a good level of development by the end of Reception. Leaders check their judgements about children's achievements with those made by teachers in other schools. A higher proportion of children in current cohort are on track to exceed some early learning goals than has been the case in recent years.
- Staff identify any additional needs at the point when children enter the provision or very shortly afterwards. They are therefore quickly able to put in place additional support, including help for those children who have emotional and social needs that threaten to impede their learning.
- Teaching in early years is good. Staff encourage children to talk about their ideas, skilfully developing their thinking, their confidence and their spoken language. They check carefully on what they have achieved so that they are able to plan their next steps accordingly. Teachers provide children with clear routines to help them to learn and retain new ideas. Occasionally, as leaders are aware, staff do not allow children sufficient opportunity to undertake tasks independently and think for themselves.
- Leaders in early years are effective. They monitor the quality of provision regularly, so that they have a detailed knowledge of the quality of teaching and learning. In response to what they find, leaders provide regular and frequent training for staff. Leaders are aware of where the comparative weaknesses in early years lie, and how these can be addressed. They work effectively with those nurseries that children attend before their arrival at Croft Academy.
- The learning environment, and, in particular, the outdoor area, are stimulating and well equipped. Resources interest children in all areas of the curriculum, including literacy and numeracy. For example, during the inspection, ducks with spots in the outdoor area proved very effective at encouraging children to think about mathematical ideas.
- Children are safe in the early years provision, and all welfare requirements are met. They relate well to each other and to adults. Because learning is well planned, children are interested in the activities and generally concentrate well.
- Leaders offer parents the opportunity to stay and play with their children, and informal communication is good. However, the take-up of activities such as workshops to involve parents more in how their children learn is thin.



## School details

Unique reference number	138420
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10048287

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	226
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Jem Shuttleworth
Executive principal	Paul Edgerton
Telephone number	01922 720689
Website	<a href="http://www.croft.walsall.sch.uk">www.croft.walsall.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin.croft@croftacademy.org">admin.croft@croftacademy.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	14 June 2016

## Information about this school

- Croft Academy is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school. Children attend the Nursery class part time. The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- About half the pupils are of Pakistani heritage. Other pupils are drawn from a number of different ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very high.
- Croft Academy is part of the Elliot Foundation Trust. It is federated with two other schools locally, and the three schools share a local governing board. When the school's principal left his post at the end of April 2018, the executive principal of the federation took over day-to-day running of the school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.

- The proportion of pupils who leave and join the school other than at the normal points of transfer is high.
- In 2017, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all year groups, including the learning of small groups of pupils outside the main classroom. Five observations were conducted jointly with the executive principal. Inspectors also observed pupils' conduct at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors held discussions with the executive principal, other leaders, staff, members of the local governing board and a representative of the academy trust.
- Three groups of pupils, two chosen at random, met with inspectors. Inspectors also spoke with many other pupils informally. One inspector listened to pupils in Years 2, 4 and 6 read.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' workbooks in lessons, and scrutinised several books in greater depth, working jointly with teachers from the trust. The lead inspector considered a range of information about current pupils' performance.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, both electronically and on paper. These included: development plans and evaluations of the school's performance; the executive principal's report to governors and the minutes of meetings held by the local governing board; policies; and reports to parents on pupils' progress. Inspectors scrutinised in detail records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils.
- There were not enough responses to the online Parent View questionnaire for inspectors to take account of these views. Inspectors looked at a summary of 75 responses to a parental questionnaire conducted by the school. They also spoke to several parents delivering their children to school. Inspectors considered 18 responses to the staff survey.

## Inspection team

Martin Spoor, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jayne Thorpe	Ofsted Inspector
Tina Willmott	Ofsted inspector

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