

# Creswick Primary & Nursery School

Sir John Newsom Way, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 4FL

#### **Inspection dates**

27-28 February 2019

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

# Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

#### This is a school that requires improvement

- Standards have fallen since the previous full inspection. Despite recent improvements, standards across the curriculum are still too inconsistent to be good.
- Some leaders lack precision in their strategic roles. They do not understand how their work impacts on raising standards in the school.
- Leaders' capacity to make and sustain improvements in teaching, learning and assessment have been hampered, until recently, by staffing turbulence.
- Leaders do not support all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) consistently well.
- Historically, leaders have not used the pupil premium funding well enough to support the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. This is now starting to improve.

#### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors know the school well. They have the capacity to improve the school.
- Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is a strength in the school's provision.

- Some teachers do not use assessment information to plan appropriate learning for pupils of different abilities. This impacts on the quality and quantity of the work that pupils produce.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their learning, particularly their writing, throughout the wider curriculum subjects.
- A few teaching assistants do not identify quickly, or provide precise enough guidance, when pupils need their support.
- Some adults do not use the school's agreed behaviour policy consistently. On occasion, adults' expectations of how pupils behave are not consistently high.
- Children in the early years are not sufficiently challenged to achieve well, especially when choosing activities independently.
- Leaders have not fully ensured parents fully understand what they are striving to achieve.
- Staff feel valued and are proud to work at Creswick Primary and Nursery School.
- The teaching of phonics is effective; early reading skills are being well developed.
- Pupils are now making better progress in mathematics.



# Full report

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, and achievement, by:
  - ensuring that all leaders are held sharply accountable for the difference that their work makes in raising standards across the curriculum in the school
  - developing leaders' monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment so that it supports staff to focus more precisely on the progress that pupils make and so helps pupils to attain higher standards in reading and writing
  - further embedding leaders' understanding and use of the additional funding they
    receive for disadvantaged pupils so that pupils' outcomes improve
  - identifying and meeting the needs of pupils with SEND more precisely so pupils achieve, attend and behave well
  - developing communication with parents so they understand the ethos, culture and rationale behind leaders' actions.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and behaviour by:
  - ensuring that teachers and adults use assessment information to plan and support learning that helps pupils to build on what they already know and can do
  - ensuring that teaching assistants are effectively deployed so they are able to support pupils to achieve well
  - ensuring that pupils have more regular opportunities to practise their skills, especially writing, across all curriculum subject areas
  - maintaining high expectations about pupils' behaviour, and addressing low-level behaviours that impact negatively on learning, including the quality and quantity of work that they complete.
- Develop provision in the early years by:
  - making sure the activities, both indoors and outside, give children opportunities to learn and use their basic skills in all areas of learning
  - developing the skills of all adults to support children in their learning, especially when children choose their own activities.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.



# **Inspection judgements**

## Effectiveness of leadership and management

#### **Requires improvement**

- Leaders have experienced significant challenges since the previous full inspection. This includes transition from a one- to a two-form-entry school, recruitment difficulties and numerous staffing changes. These aspects have presented leaders, including governors, with many distractions. The impact of this unsettled time has slowed down the pace of school improvement and led to a decline in standards.
- Despite their best efforts, leaders have found it difficult over time to secure consistent approaches to teaching. Challenges in recruiting and retaining staff over the past two years have contributed to a lack of high-quality teaching, learning and assessment. Although there are improvements, leaders have not been wholly successful in ensuring that pupils benefit from securely good teaching against a context of staff changes and limitations in leadership capacity.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has grown considerably. However, the local authority has not provided sufficiently appropriate support to the leadership team during such a significant change. The support that has been provided has not included some aspects of concern, such as provision for pupils with SEND. School leaders engage positively with additional support when they think it best suits the needs of the school. The recent focus on disadvantaged pupils' achievement is starting to contribute to improvements in pupils' outcomes, in particular disadvantaged pupils' progress.
- Until recently, leaders' capacity to undertake rigorous monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment has been limited. This is because some leaders have increased their teaching commitment to secure continuity of learning for pupils across the school. Consequently, leaders have not been wholly successful in eradicating inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Not all leaders are contributing as much to raising standards as they would like to in their respective areas. While these leaders are committed to their roles, for example the curriculum leader, they have not had time to bring about necessary improvements quickly enough. Within the leadership team, there is some lack of clarity about leaders' roles and responsibilities, which weakens their strategic oversight. Therefore, leaders have not improved their areas of responsibility quickly enough.
- Leaders are not clear enough about the identification process for all pupils with SEND. The small number of pupils with education, health and care plans are supported effectively in liaison with external agencies. The support for other pupils with SEND is not so well defined. Monitoring of the provision for pupils with SEND is not consistently rigorous enough to routinely identify what is and is not effective. This means that leaders are not sure about the effectiveness of the provision for all pupils with SEND and the impact of the funding for all these pupils.
- Until recently, leaders have not used the pupil premium funding well enough to



improve the academic outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. There are signs that some disadvantaged pupils are currently making stronger gains in their learning than in the past. This is not consistent between different year groups or subjects. Over time, disadvantaged pupils have not fared well by the end of Year 6 when compared with other pupils nationally.

- While the curriculum provides pupils with the chance to learn a full range of subjects, the astute curriculum leader rightly identifies that pupils need more opportunities to use their learned skills, such as writing, in different subject areas and to develop and deepen their understanding, knowledge and skills throughout the wider curriculum. This work is in the early stages of development.
- Leaders work effectively to develop and build successful relationships with parents. While appreciating leaders' work, a significant proportion of parents are unhappy about the standard of behaviour across the school and believe it has a negative impact on the progress and happiness of their children.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported effectively within aspects of the wider curriculum, including assemblies. These additional aspects to the school's chosen curriculum provide valuable experiences for pupils and show some teachers are creatively considering how to engage pupils. For example, during the inspection visit, Year 6 pupils spent the afternoon re-enacting being a child during the Second World War. Furthermore, there are thematic days and focus weeks, such as 'pens down' days, 'feeling good' and 'enterprise' weeks. In addition to this, pupils learn about various faiths and cultures and have a secure understanding of British values.
- Leaders use the primary school physical education (PE) and sport funding well. The relatively new sports leader teaches PE alongside teachers and supports staff at lunchtimes to provide activities for pupils. This is already successfully improving the quality of teaching and learning in PE and supporting staff to build their confidence in physical activities. Pupils enjoy PE and have access to a wide range of clubs and opportunities to represent their school in competitive events.
- Leaders' focus on mathematics is improving the teaching of mathematics across the school effectively. The mathematics leader has successfully led training and supported teachers in their planning. He has followed up his actions by carefully checking the mathematics provision to ensure that it is getting better in all year groups. As a result, leadership work on this priority has been effective.
- Staff morale is high. The headteacher along with her deputy headteacher have worked hard to build and develop their team amid the adversity they have faced. These efforts are coming to fruition. This is proven in the high level of positive responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire in which, overwhelmingly, staff say they are proud to work at the school. While staff identify aspects of pupils' behaviour that worry them, they appreciate leaders' focus on their well-being and the reduction in their workload. Staff, including those early in their teaching careers and teaching assistants, appreciate the support leaders provide. One comment summed up the responses of many: 'Staff voice is encouraged and listened to. Improvements and adjustments have been made based on feedback provided.'
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher, along with governors, accurately identify the issues and challenges that they face. They are ambitious for the school's success and have an honest and reflective view about where the school needs to be better.



They know that teaching varies too much from class to class and have secure, precise plans about how to raise standards so that they are consistently high throughout the whole school.

# Governance of the school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been changes in the governing body. Governors offer a professional, broad range of skills and experience. Along with the headteacher, they are determined to improve the school. Governors are keen to learn more to ensure that they are able to support the school well. They are aware of their areas to develop, and in line with this have already commissioned a review of governance which has provided them with pointers on how to improve their effectiveness.
- Governors have begun to ask deeper and more appropriately challenging questions about aspects of the school's work. Their focus on standards, for example, probes how well disadvantaged pupils achieve. They are quickly gaining a more secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Governors undertake appropriate training and are fully aware of their legal duties for safeguarding, including ensuring that staff are recruited with careful consideration and appropriate checks.
- The headteacher provides the governing body with relevant information about leaders' actions to improve the school. Governors follow up discussions about pupils' progress and attainment with monitoring visits. This is further helping governors to gain a better understanding of the school's effectiveness.

# Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders spend a high proportion of time ensuring pupils are safeguarded well. Although this has rightly taken priority, it has contributed towards lessening senior leaders' capacity to focus on aspects of school improvement.
- The headteacher and governors have a secure oversight of recruitment procedures. These are detailed, have been checked by the local authority and meet legal requirements. The headteacher and safeguarding governor review safeguarding systems, training and practice regularly and are quick to identify any areas that could be further improved.
- Different groups of staff groups are very clear about the school's agreed procedures. Leaders ensure that they update staff on policy and practice through regular team meetings and appropriate training.
- Leaders conscientiously implement their systems, policies and procedures to help keep children safe from harm. Safeguarding records are kept up to date, and school records show that leaders take appropriate actions when required. Leaders work with parents and external agencies effectively to ensure that pupils are supported and safe.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in the school. The curriculum contributes well to raising pupils' awareness of safe practices, especially online safety. Despite some parents raising concerns about pupils' behaviour, the majority of parents



who responded to Ofsted's online survey, and those who spoke with inspectors, agree that their children are safe. One parent said: 'I really value the school's focus on children's well-being and safety. You can leave your child without any worry about them being safe.'

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## **Requires improvement**

- There is too much variability in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teaching has not been consistently effective in helping pupils make good progress. Although there is evidence that improving teaching and learning are beginning to improve the progress of some pupils, this is not the same for all pupils in all classes.
- Some teachers too readily accept poorly presented work from pupils instead of demanding well-presented work that reflects the highest expectations. Adults do not teach handwriting well enough and do not consistently model good handwriting for pupils to know what the expectations are. This is hindering pupils' ability to accurately form letters and, subsequently, to be able to write and present their work neatly.
- Not all teachers and other adults have high enough expectations. As a result, the tasks they provide do not offer pupils enough challenge. This is the case for pupils of all abilities. From their various starting points, pupils either complete tasks quickly or without needing to give their work much thought. Consequently, pupils of all abilities miss out on being stretched further and do not engage fully in their learning.
- Pupils with SEND are not always well supported in lessons because staff have not consistently identified their specific needs precisely enough. Group and individual sessions led by teaching assistants vary in quality and some lack focus and impact.
- The effectiveness of teaching assistants' support is inconsistent. This is because teachers are not precise enough about how they use teaching assistants to support pupils to make the progress they should. While some teaching assistants apply the training they have received to full effect to enhance their work, others are not as confident or clear about what to do to support pupils to learn better.
- During the inspection, classroom visits showed some incidences of off-task behaviours, such as pupils talking excessively and sometimes distracting others from their work. This was particularly the case when teaching was less effective. Consequently, some pupils lost interest in their work and/or were not clear about what they were learning. In addition, teachers did not always deal with these behaviours or follow the school's agreed behaviour policy. Therefore, this resulted in some pupils not making the progress they are capable of.
- Teachers' questioning is not always sufficiently skilful, which means that teachers are not fully able to assess how well pupils understand what they are learning or to encourage pupils to think more deeply. However, where questioning is more effective, pupils are expected to provide reasons for their responses. This helps to improve their use of a range of vocabulary and apply their learned skills more proficiently.
- The curriculum provides too few opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their reading and writing in other subjects. This prevents pupils from building on and consolidating these skills in a wide range of subjects. This is particularly noteworthy in writing. Pupils have limited opportunities for sustained and extended writing in both



their English work and in other subjects.

- Pupils are confident, fluent readers at their own level. Their reading diaries show they read often at home. While there is evidence of teaching improving pupils' reading comprehension and understanding of text, reading is not positively promoted across the school. Reading areas in the classrooms and around the school do not promote good reading habits. Some reading resources are not in good condition so pupils are not attracted to reading them.
- There are examples of where pupils' learning is stronger in the school. Where learning is best, staff adjust their planning to meet the needs of varying abilities of pupils. This helps pupils to correct any misconceptions quickly. As a result, pupils gain an accurate understanding of what they are learning and make better progress.
- The teaching of mathematics is helping pupils to secure better basic skills in number and calculation. Teachers are planning more opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills and to use and apply these skills to mathematical problems. As a result, pupils' work in mathematics is stronger than other subjects and their progress is more positive.
- The teaching of early reading skills and phonics is accurate and effective. Pupils use their phonics skills to blend sounds together and break down words into separate sounds. Pupils confidently apply their phonics knowledge to read new words. This supports pupils to make positive progress in their phonics learning, particularly in Reception and Year 1.

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement** 

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development requires improvement.
- While there are some pupils who take pride in their work, this is not consistent across the school. This is because teachers' and other adults' expectations are not high enough. Pupils are not routinely picked up on how well they present their work and not regularly reminded or expected to try their best.
- Leaders have focused on developing pupils' attitudes to learning. While a proportion of pupils have positive attitudes, other pupils do become indifferent and distracted where teachers' expectations are not high enough or pupils receive work that is not suited to their needs. This results in some pupils not doing their best to be successful and losing interest in their learning.
- At breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils are well supervised and appear happy and content. Pupils enjoy the available activities and talk fondly of the time they spend with their friends.
- Pupils say they feel safe and cared for at Creswick. Pupils spoken to said they could speak to adults if they had a problem and they feel listened to when they talk to adults about their worries.
- Pupils know and understand the risks of using the internet and have an ageappropriate understanding of the potential risks of social media. Pupils show they know how to keep their personal details to themselves and understand not to share them



with anyone.

Leaders and staff know their community well. They ensure that pupils are well cared for and families well supported. This is particularly the case for the more vulnerable pupils.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Although behaviour has improved since the previous inspection, it is not good. This is because there are still instances of off-task behaviour during lessons. Staff do not consistently implement the school's behaviour policy. Too often, pupils' low-level behaviour goes unchallenged by adults and can disrupt the learning of others.
- Pupils said they do get distracted by other pupils and this disrupts their learning. However, pupils also commented that behaviour is getting better. For example, one pupil said: 'Some children do not behave well and it is really irritating, but it happens less than it used to because everyone is being more caring and considerate.'
- Although leaders have had some success over the past year with improving pupils' behaviour, there is still some disruption to learning and this, subsequently, impacts upon pupils' progress. While some of the weaker behaviour is because teaching does not sufficiently engage pupils' interests, another reason this happens is because there is a lack of understanding about the school's behaviour policy and the 'STEPS' processes in place.
- Pupils with more challenging behaviour now try harder to follow the school rules: 'to be safe, respect and be ready to learn'. There remains a proportion of pupils who display inappropriate behaviours. Leaders have ensured that such pupils are supported appropriately to have access to their learning and remain in school. As a result, more recently there has been a reduction in exclusions from school.
- Leaders, supported by the school's family support worker, are improving attendance through early intervention, regular checking and adherence to the school's procedures. Although attendance remains below national average, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved and is now better than the attendance of other pupils. In addition, the proportion of pupils persistently absent has reduced. Consequently, pupils attend school more regularly and therefore have access to their full education.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

## **Requires improvement**

- Outcomes over time have declined and for current pupils are variable throughout the school.
- Despite evidence of improvement, leaders acknowledge that pupils' attainment and progress over time have been affected by changes in staffing and variability in the quality of teaching. This is particularly apparent in published information for key stage 2, where pupils do not make the progress that they should in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, too many pupils do not attain the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics to prepare them well for the next stage of their education.



- In key stage 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading and mathematics was similar to national averages in 2018. It was below the national average in writing. The proportion of pupils attaining greater depth was below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been improving. In 2018 it was above the national average. Pupils in Year 1 continue to benefit from a systematic approach to the teaching of effective skills in phonics.
- The progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics varies between classes. While there are examples of better progress being achieved, particularly in mathematics, it is inconsistent and not enough current pupils are making good progress in reading and writing throughout the school.
- Where teaching is most effective, most-able pupils are challenged to achieve well. However, as with all groups of pupils, challenge for the most able pupils is not consistent enough. As a result, most-able pupils' achievement is variable across the school according to the quality and effectiveness of teaching.
- Disadvantaged pupils are starting to make better progress. Over time they have not achieved well when their attainment is compared with that of other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. However, closer checks on pupils' understanding and more precise reviews of their support are beginning to move pupils on at a faster pace.
- Pupils with SEND who have education, health and care plans are well supported to meet their targets. The planned provision suits their complex needs so they make positive progress. However, there is a lack of clarity about the identification and provision in place for some other pupils with SEND. Where this appears better, teaching assistants use their specialist training to support pupils' needs effectively and there is evidence that these pupils with SEND make better progress.
- Assessment in the wider curriculum is currently being developed. Pupils do not consistently have the opportunity to develop and deepen their knowledge so that they are able to demonstrate how well they achieve in other subject areas. There are not consistently well-planned opportunities for pupils to both learn subject-specific skills and be able to apply their basic skills. This is particularly the case in writing where there are fewer opportunities for pupils to develop, extend and use their writing skills.
- The curriculum provides infrequent opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their reading, writing and mathematics knowledge and skills in other subjects. Pupils do not develop their skills in all subjects as consistently as they should. Leaders' monitoring of the curriculum through the newly formed 'creative', 'humanities' and 'citizenship' teams is currently less frequent than in mathematics, reading and writing. This means that leaders cannot fully assure themselves that pupils are making good progress in all subjects.

### **Early years provision**

#### **Requires improvement**

■ Children join both Nursery and Reception with skills, knowledge and understanding



similar to those typical for their age. In 2018, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above the national average.

- Although the early years leader is knowledgeable about early years, monitoring shows there is not enough rigour and precision in ensuring the practice across Nursery and Reception is consistently effective.
- Children are more confident learners when they work with adults than when they choose their own learning. In the adult-led activities children enjoy working with an adult and want to do well. When working on their own, a few children find it difficult to sustain interest and concentration, particularly when it is unclear to them what they are supposed to be learning.
- Adults do not consistently support children to make the best progress they can. This happens when adults do not skilfully intervene to ensure children's learning is purposeful. This is particularly the case when children choose their own tasks and follow their own lines of enquiry.
- Although children enjoy learning in the inside and outdoor areas, some of the activities planned do not excite or encourage pupils' learning. This is because they lack purpose and children are not always clear what to do. This results in children flitting from one activity to another, rather than learning to focus and concentrate on developing basic skills and applying their knowledge and understanding.
- All adults in early years form warm and caring relationships with children. Adults have a good understanding of how to keep children safe and know how to assess when children might be at risk. Children are comfortable to approach adults when they are worried and regularly seek help when they want or need it.
- Early years staff work closely with parents to share information about how well their children are doing. Parents appreciate the communication from staff, which is helping them to understand how to support their children at home.



# **School details**

Unique reference number	117229
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10053038

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	461
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Emma Porter
Headteacher	Fay Brett
Telephone number	01707 323038
Website	www.creswick.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@creswick.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 May 2014

# Information about this school

- Creswick Primary and Nursery School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Since the previous section 5 inspection, Creswick Primary and Nursery School has increased from a one-form to two-form-entry school.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average. A smaller proportion of pupils than the national average have education, health and care plans.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is similar to national average.



# Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes on more than one occasion and jointly with leaders. During visits to lessons, inspectors looked at pupils' books, spoke with pupils and looked at their current work to find out how well they are learning.
- Alongside leaders, inspectors looked at a large sample of pupils' books across a range of subjects to evaluate pupils' learning in English, mathematics and across the wider curriculum. Inspectors talked to pupils about their reading and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors talked to groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning to find out what it is like to be a pupil at Creswick Primary and Nursery School. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during breaktime and lunchtime. Inspectors attended two assemblies, one in key stage 1, including Year 3 pupils, and another for key stage 2 pupils.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and both assistant headteachers, one of which is the inclusion leader and the other who is the mathematics leader. The lead inspector also met with the curriculum leader who is also the key stage 1 leader and leads reading across the school. Other inspectors met with the early years leader, the writing leader and the family support worker.
- The lead inspector also spoke to a representative from the local authority and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents gathered from the 72 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the 72 free-text responses. Inspectors also arranged a formal meeting for parents on the second day of the inspection, had conversations with parents at the start of school on the first day of the inspection, took account of emails received from two parents and held seven telephone conversations with parents.
- Inspectors took account of the 41 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and the 58 responses to the online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those related to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, exclusions, the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school's development plans.

### **Inspection team**

Tracy Fielding, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nick Rudman	Ofsted Inspector
Debbie Rogan	Ofsted Inspector



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