

# Inspection of Croft Academy

Croft Street, Walsall, West Midlands WS2 8JE

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Inspection dates: 26 and 27 April 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are happy at Croft Academy because they are well cared for. Staff take the time to get to know each pupil and their families. Parents and carers appreciate this. This is a school where it is 'ok to be different'. Some of the pupils start at the school as newcomers to the country and cannot speak English. Everyone at school makes sure that these pupils feel welcome and quickly settle into school life. There is a strong sense of community.

Pupils behave well during lessons, when moving around the school and at playtimes. They are polite and well mannered. They look after each other. Pupils say that bullying does sometimes happen, but they are confident that adults will deal with it quickly.

Staff at Croft Academy have worked hard to move the school forward, but changes in leadership have delayed the impact of this work. The trust recognises this and has put plans in place to further improve the school. The recently established leadership team has a clear vision to develop the school and has begun to make the changes needed to improve the quality of education. All staff want the best for the pupils and are supporting the changes.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

In subjects such as mathematics and reading, leaders have thought carefully about what pupils need to learn and when. This helps teachers to plan lessons that build on what pupils have learned before. Pupils can usually remember and can talk about what they have learned in these subjects. However, in other subjects such as art and music, the new curriculum plans contain too much content for the available curriculum time. As a result, teachers cannot cover the content in sufficient depth and much of the learning is superficial. As the pupils progress through the school, they do not have the necessary prior knowledge and skills in these subjects. They struggle to remember what they have learned, and are sometimes confused.

Where learning is most effective, the curriculum ensures that pupils build their knowledge and skills over time. However, in some cases, the curriculum is more focused on an activity rather than on developing pupils' learning. When this is the case, pupils are not provided with opportunities to practise their learning and develop their skill and accuracy. As a result of this, over time, this learning is often forgotten.

Leaders have prioritised reading across the curriculum to ensure that every pupil develops a love of reading. Staff immerse children in stories and rhymes as soon as they start in Nursery. This develops their speech and language. In Reception, daily phonics sessions help children to learn their sounds quickly. All staff have had training in the teaching of phonics so that they can support pupils effectively with their reading. Across the school, children love reading and most pupils read regularly at home and at school. Older pupils talk about their favourite books and authors

with understanding and pleasure. One pupil said, 'When you read, it puts you into a completely different world that is just for you.'

Children settle quickly into the Nursery and Reception classes. Staff have worked hard to develop positive relationships with parents through workshops and an open-door policy. The early years classrooms and outdoor areas are very well resourced. Children listen well, work well together and enjoy learning new things. They are keen to share their achievements with others.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective support. Staff receive regular training on how to support pupils with SEND. Leaders and teachers work with parents to put suitable plans in place. Leaders and staff understand pupils' needs well. As a result, staff support pupils with SEND well.

Many aspects of pupils' wider development are well established. Leaders ensure that lessons in various subjects promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. These lessons help pupils understand how to care for themselves and how to maintain healthy relationships with others. They learn about different faiths and understand why they need to show respect to others.

Staff work closely together and support each other well. They are reflective and thoughtful about their work and keen to improve. They say that they are well supported, and leaders consider their well-being and work-life balance. The school receives significant support from the trust. However, owing to staffing changes, improvements have not moved at the pace required. This is something that the trust recognises. It has made some staffing changes that are already leading to improvements across the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. There is a strong culture of safeguarding, and effective systems are in place to keep pupils safe. Staff receive regular training that ensures that they can identify any problems that pupils may face. Staff have confidence in leaders to deal with concerns they have raised effectively. Leaders work closely with external agencies. They are tenacious and skilled at getting appropriate support that makes a difference for pupils and families.

Pupils spoken to say that they feel safe. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders have not prioritised the key knowledge and skills that they want pupils to learn in some subjects. As a result of this, there is too much content in some

subjects and pupils' learning does not build on their previous knowledge. Leaders should ensure that they continue to refine the curriculum, identifying and sequencing the important knowledge and skills that they want pupils to learn in these subjects, enabling them to know and remember more and deepen their understanding.

- Some subjects focus on outcomes and activities rather than providing opportunities for pupils to develop fluency and to practise and refine skills. This means that some pupils only gain a superficial knowledge of the subject over time and are then unable to remember what they have learned. Leaders need to develop opportunities within the curriculum to practise and revisit skills to ensure that learning is remembered over time.
- Changes in leadership have stalled improvements. Trust leaders have recognised this and have put plans in place to stabilise and improve leadership. Leaders now need to ensure that planned improvements are acted on swiftly to ensure that pupils receive a good-quality education.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138420
<b>Local authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	10227368
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	246
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Caroline Whalley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gemma Down
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.croftacademy.org">www.croftacademy.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 May 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school has part-time provision for two-year-olds.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been changes in the support that the school receives from the trust and there is currently an acting head of school.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the acting head of school and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the Elliot Foundation Academies Trust, which sponsors the school.

- The inspection focused on reading, mathematics, history and art. Inspectors met subject leaders for these subjects and undertook joint visits to lessons. They also talked to pupils and teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those related to safeguarding arrangements, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors also reviewed the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school's development plans.
- Inspectors talked to staff about their role in keeping pupils safe.
- Inspectors held informal and formal discussions with pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including additional free-text comments. They also took account of responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil questionnaires.

### **Inspection team**

Emma Gater, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Longden

Ofsted Inspector

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