

Inspection of North Crescent Primary School

North Crescent, Wickford, Essex SS12 9AP

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at North Crescent are benefiting from an improving education. The curriculum in place is ambitious to meet the core learning needs of pupils and help pupils to develop holistically. This is beginning to shine through in the lessons pupils receive. However, not all pupils benefit equally from this work.

Expectations for pupils' behaviour are high. This is shown in the way that pupils approach their learning and interact with each other and staff. Consistency in the way adults work with pupils means respectful attitudes permeate all parts of the school. Bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that adults will sort out any problems that do arise. They know adults genuinely care for them and they feel safe.

Through the curriculum, pupils reflect on their place in the world. For example, pupils explore the United Nation's Rights of the Child. This contributes towards supporting pupils to have confidence in their identities and voices. Pupils are effectively taught to understand and manage their feelings. Targeted support is also on hand to build the social and emotional skills pupils need to flourish as members of a supportive community.

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

Leaders, with the support of the trust, have been bold in identifying some significant areas of the quality of education that need improvement. Despite the pandemic and staffing changes, leaders have maintained their focus. They have not delayed the important changes required.

Leaders have introduced a curriculum that builds pupils' knowledge and skills progressively during their time in school. These changes have been recent and learning routines are still relatively new. Targeted training means that teachers have the knowledge about the subjects being taught. However, they do not always make sure that pupils have sufficient practice with the knowledge they are learning. This includes learning in the early years. As a result, some pupils struggle to recall and apply their new and growing knowledge, including in phonics to support their early reading development.

Improving the teaching of reading has been a high priority for all staff. There is a structured programme in place to teach phonics. Recent training for staff is improving the consistency of phonics practice that pupils get in lessons. Investment in high-quality books is having an impact. Pupils especially enjoy the opportunity to listen to stories being read in class. Older pupils in the school with secure reading knowledge are especially able to make good use of the rich and interesting texts on offer.

Teachers and learning supervisors know pupils well. This supports them to accurately assess what pupils do and do not know. In reading, pupils who are not secure with newly introduced sounds are spotted quickly. They have extra time in

the afternoon to rehearse and try and keep up. Nevertheless, the support offered is not of a consistently high quality, and so pupils are taking too long to catch up with their peers.

There are effective systems in place to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This ensures that pupils with SEND are identified without delay. They are then given the specific support that will help them overcome barriers. This means they learn the curriculum alongside pupils in their class. Pupils with SEND in the school tend to have more gaps in what they remember. The impact of the improvements to the quality of education underway are helping to ensure these pupils do not fall further behind.

From the moment children start in Reception they begin to develop their social skills effectively. Positive interactions, modelled by staff, provide a strong foundation for personal development. Across the curriculum, pupils are exposed to key themes such as culture. These strands are revisited regularly, over time. This is supporting pupils to understand acceptance and to celebrate differences between themselves. Pupils also have access to a range of clubs, such as gardening and multi-sports. These experiences help them to develop their interests more widely.

Leaders understand the need to embed the improvements being made to the quality of education with focus and urgency. While the trust is investing in the growing expertise of the local school board, governors do not check precisely enough how effective leaders' actions are in improving the quality of education. Typically, parents and carers appreciate the connection they have with staff in school. There are a significant number of parents who are confused about some of the rapid changes in the school. Leaders are aware of this. They are actively working to reassure the wider school community about future plans.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established clear routines to share and record concerns about pupils. These are understood well by all staff. The training given to staff has made sure that they know how to keep pupils safe. They have expertise to spot the changes in behaviour that may indicate when a child is worried or at risk of harm.

Staff working with the most vulnerable families build strong, trusting relationships to ensure that support provided to keep pupils safe is effective. Pupils receive age-appropriate lessons that give them the knowledge they need to be safe and healthy as they grow.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The implementation of the curriculum does not match the high ambition agreed and set out by leaders. This is particularly true for pupils with the greatest gaps in what they know. Leaders need to make sure learning across the full curriculum supports all pupils to practise and remember the important knowledge they need to be successful.
- Due to variations in the curriculum implementation, too many pupils require additional support to keep up in phonics. Leaders should ensure that pupils have high-quality teaching, and remaining gaps are addressed quickly and effectively to support pupils to read accurately and fluently.
- The local school board of governors is developing rapidly to support ongoing improvement in the school. The board should focus its attention on precise, agreed priorities to ensure that actions taken to improve the quality of education are robustly monitored and evaluated.

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

Unique reference number	145049
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10227583
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	175
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paula Whittle
Headteacher	Sharon Walker
Website	www.northcrescent.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the South Essex Alliance Multi-Academy Trust in January 2018.
- There is a before- and after-school childcare provision on the school site which is managed by those with responsibility for governance.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision to meet the needs of pupils.

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 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 headteacher and special educational needs coordinator. Meetings were also held with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust and the chair of trustees.

- Inspectors met with three members of the local school board, including the chair of the board and the two vice chairs.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in four subjects: early reading, geography, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documentation, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and, where relevant, looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher, who is the school's designated safeguarding leader, the inclusion manager, the school's finance administrator and other staff to discuss safeguarding.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation during the inspection, including curriculum plans, school development plans, safeguarding and behaviour records.
- Inspectors considered 33 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and 32 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors also spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school. Inspectors also observed the behaviour of pupils across the school site.

Inspection team

Kristian Hewitt, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clare Fletcher

Ofsted Inspector

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