

Inspection of Creswick Primary & Nursery School

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

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 December 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

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are benefiting from the positive changes that leaders are making across the school. Pupils know that they must follow instructions and behave sensibly at all times. Pupils say that bullying is now unusual and that they trust staff to sort out any issues fairly, should they arise.

Pupils enjoy the challenge of 'going for gold' and striving to reach teachers' high expectations. Pupils develop values and skills, such as cooperation and motivation. These qualities help them make the most of the many learning opportunities on offer. Pupils enjoy a range of special events, visits and clubs, that bring learning alive. These extra-curricular experiences are valued by all.

Pupils receive an education that has ambitious aims. Although the quality of the education is secure in some subjects, there is variation in the quality of teachers' subject knowledge. This means that, in some subject lessons, pupils are not receiving the precise instruction and guidance they should.

Pupils are safe and know they can share their worries with adults in school. Pupils feel listened to. They have confidence in the staff that have made their school a better place to learn and play. Parents speak positively about the shift in culture leaders have achieved for their children.

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

Recently appointed senior leaders have started to take decisive action to address key weaknesses in the school's provision. Through clear, prioritised changes, leaders have responded to the concerns shared by staff, parents and pupils. Leaders have addressed the inconsistencies in pupils' behaviour. In class, pupils are respectful and productive. During lessons, teaching and learning is rarely disrupted.

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is ambitious from the moment children join Nursery. In all subject areas, the curriculum sets out the knowledge that pupils should learn and in what order. However, teaching staff have varied subject knowledge and expertise. As a result, teaching is not consistently effective, and pupils have some gaps in what they know. This includes children in early years.

Leaders have put systems in place for teachers to check what pupils know. In most circumstances, teachers make effective use of these checks to address any misconceptions that pupils have. Leaders know where teaching is strongest and where this needs to improve. Leaders share best practice with staff, but there is more work to do for the quality of teaching to be consistently effective across the school. Subject leaders need support to monitor the impact the curriculum is having.

Staff share a commitment that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) will achieve as well as they can. Leaders work with teachers to

identify the needs of these pupils accurately. Although pupils with SEND experience some of the same variation in curriculum as their peers, they are helped to learn successfully. Teaching staff develop detailed support plans that are matched to pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils with SEND are able to access the curriculum alongside their classmates.

Reading has a high priority. Daily phonics sessions support pupils with their early reading. Pupils are keen to learn. However, staff knowledge and expertise to deliver effective phonics teaching varies. Pupils do not always learn their phonics as well as they should. Pupils enjoy practising the sounds they have learned. This includes when reading books that are carefully matched to their level of ability. Older pupils get the ongoing support they need with reading. This helps them read across the curriculum with confidence and fluency.

The nursery provision is a strength. Staff provide meaningful teaching and activities that link closely to the knowledge children are learning. This prepares children well for the Reception Year and beyond. Leaders are focused on sharing this effective practice across early years. Currently, where staff subject knowledge in Reception is not as secure, this limits the quality interactions that help children learn.

Pupils' good conduct across the school results in calm classrooms, where learning is the focus. Pupils are encouraged to be active citizens in their school community. They have the opportunity to apply their leadership skills through roles of responsibility, such as Fairtrade committee members and house captains. Pupils cherish the chance to make a difference and to act as role models for younger pupils.

Governors have been steadfast in seeking improvements in the school. In addition to the challenges presented by the pandemic, governors have had to stabilise staffing, including appointing a new headteacher. This has taken significant time and expertise. As a result of this focus on staffing, governors have not held leaders to account robustly enough for some aspects of education and the implementation of all agreed policies. Staff value the support they have received from leaders through a period of significant change.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders understand their responsibility to keep pupils safe. They ensure that robust and appropriate checks are made on adults working at the school. All staff receive relevant safeguarding training. This supports them to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities. Leaders have established effective procedures for staff to share information and any concerns about pupils.

Pupils are encouraged to share their understanding about safeguarding through regular discussions and surveys. This helps leaders to check whether pupils feel

safe. Pupils learn about keeping safe through life skills lessons and assemblies. This supports them to make healthy and safe choices, including when using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teaching staff do not have sufficiently secure subject knowledge. This means that teaching does not routinely support pupils to remember and understand what they have learned. Leaders should ensure that all staff involved in teaching have sufficient subject knowledge and expertise to deliver the full curriculum effectively. This includes in the early years and in the teaching of early reading.
- Subject leaders have had limited capacity to check how well the curriculum is being taught. Senior leaders should ensure that all subject leaders monitor and review the impact the curriculum is having on pupils' achievement. Subject leaders can then make the right curriculum adaptations and provide teachers with the appropriate support so that all pupils learn successfully over time.
- Due to a range of challenges, governors have not checked thoroughly that all leaders' actions are consistently effective. This means that some practices in the school are not as impactful as possible. Governors need to ensure that they have consistently secure expertise to support them to hold leaders to account for all agreed policies, as well as ongoing curriculum improvement.

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.

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	117229
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10241120
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	413
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ruth Akehurst
Headteacher	Nicola Covington
Website	www.creswick.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 March 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there has been a change in leadership. Following the departure of the previous substantive headteacher in February 2022, an interim headteacher was appointed. A new substantive headteacher joined the school in September 2022.
- The school has an on-site breakfast and after-school club that is managed by the governing body.
- The school uses one registered off-site alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the interim headteacher, the deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers to discuss a range of provisions across the school, including behaviour, SEND provision and early years.
- The lead inspector met with four governors, including the chair and vice chair of the governing body, to discuss governance.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, physical education and computing. 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 designated safeguarding leader, the school's business manager, the pastoral leader and other staff to discuss safeguarding.
- During the inspection, inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the single central record, curriculum plans, school development plans, safeguarding and behaviour records.
- 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 and considered the 77 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered the 50 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including parents' free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the 33 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Kristian Hewitt, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Richard Fordham	Ofsted Inspector
Amy Luu	Ofsted Inspector

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