

Inspection of Crabtree Junior School

Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire AL5 5PU

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The executive headteacher of this school is Emma Simmons. This school is part of the Ivy Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Matthew Kleiner-Mann, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Deborah Thompson. The executive headteacher is also responsible for one other school.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Crabtree Junior School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Crabtree Junior School to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils here have 'G.R.I.T' in abundance. The values of 'growth', 'resilience', 'independence' and 'teamwork' are golden threads that run through the school. Pupils draw on their resilience when faced with challenges in class or on the sports field. A plethora of opportunities to be leaders are hungrily accepted by pupils, who want to make their school the best it can be. They thrive in roles such as diversity leaders, play leaders or peer mediators. These opportunities support pupils to become active and responsible citizens.

Pupils behave in an exemplary manner. They have strikingly positive attitudes to their learning. They love sharing talents, be they musical, sporting or teaching others how to speak another language. The 'hive' provides a space where skilled adults work to help pupils who need support with emotional needs. Pupils delight in caring for Bodhi, the much-loved school dog. He is always on hand to offer support to anyone who might be feeling sad.

Pupils realise adults' high expectations each day. Pupils develop detailed knowledge and skills across the whole curriculum. Whether an understanding of defensive principles in lacrosse or detailed knowledge of geographical processes, pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6 with a rich and well-rounded body of knowledge.

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

Pupils benefit from learning a precisely designed curriculum. Across all subjects, the school's curriculum is coherently designed, and pupils build on their impressive knowledge as they move through the school. Pupils learn and use a rich vocabulary. Teachers are skilled in designing and adapting activities in light of their checks on what pupils remember. This means pupils build their new learning on solid foundations, making new links and connections with what they already know. Pupils produce work of a consistently high standard.

Accurate identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) mean these pupils receive the guidance they need. These pupils learn the same rich, ambitious curriculum as their friends, the difference being that pupils with SEND receive skilful support from adults to help remove their barriers to learning. Pupils with SEND achieve exceptionally well.

Pupils 'devour' books at this school. Through lessons and their own reading, they encounter a range of rich texts. They readily share book recommendations with one another. Pupils joining the school who need extra help with reading are very well supported. They receive expert phonics teaching, which means they catch up quickly.

The culture of mutual respect flows from pupils learning a very well-established personal development programme. Pupils who sit on the diversity council play a major role in ensuring that the school continues to be welcoming, where all are

celebrated no matter a person's background or belief. This culture readies pupils to be respectful citizens who live and breathe equality in their daily lives.

The school brims with wider opportunities for pupils to take part in. From archery to Mandarin to chess, there is something for everyone. If there is not, pupils work with staff to create new clubs and activities. Those who represent the school in sporting events do so with pride.

Pastoral support is wide-ranging. The school knows pupils as individuals and, if needed, high-quality pastoral support is tailored to meet the social and emotional needs of pupils. Attendance is high. Pupils are itching to get to school each day.

Classrooms are vibrant, happy places. While pupils have much fun and laughter with their friends, they know that when play stops and work starts, they are expected to concentrate and try their best. This is exactly what they do.

Staff are overwhelmingly proud to be part of the school community. Regular training helps staff stay sharp and keep ahead of the game. Senior leaders do much to look after staff's well-being.

The trust board and local governing board work together seamlessly. Each know their responsibilities, carrying them out extremely well. Members of the local governing board are suitably skilled and knowledgeable. They visit regularly to check on safeguarding, pupils' learning and the well-being of staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	140708
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10255031
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	255
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Deborah Thompson
CEO of the trust	Matthew Kleiner-Mann
Headteacher	Emma Simmons
Website	www.crabtreeschools.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Ivy Learning Trust and joined the trust in May 2021.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors: held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils

about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils from Years 3 and 4 read to an adult.

- Inspectors also reviewed curriculum plans in physical education, religious education and computing, along with speaking to staff and pupils about these subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust, the chair of trustees and other trust leaders. The lead inspector also held a meeting with members of the local governing board.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspection team considered the views of 196 parents shared through Ofsted Parent View. They gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys, interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Nathan Lowe, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Conor Heaven	His Majesty's Inspector
Neil Taggart	Ofsted Inspector

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