

Inspection of Crabtree Infants' School

Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire AL5 5PU

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 February 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The executive headteacher of this school is Emma Simmons. The 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 Infants' School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Crabtree Infants' School to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where all pupils, including children in the early years, can flourish. Pupils know that all adults at the school want the very best for them and their learning. The inclusive, calm and harmonious environment helps pupils to thrive. The school is aspirational. Pupils develop highly positive attitudes to their learning right from the start. They become curious and confident learners.

Staff make it a priority to know all the pupils and their families well. This helps pupils feel safe and cared for. Pupils talk fondly about 'the hive', a place they can go to talk to adults if they have any worries.

Pupils arrive each day full of smiles and eager to start their learning. Staff expect pupils to behave well, and they do. Behaviour is exemplary during lessons, around the school and in the playground. Pupils know and model the school values at all times. They care and look out for each other. They are confident to take risks and know it is okay to make mistakes. Pupils are overwhelmingly happy at school.

Pupils, and their parents and carers, would unreservedly recommend this school to others. Everyone is proud to be part of the Crabtree family.

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

The school curriculum is extremely ambitious and meticulously planned. Nothing is left to chance. The school anticipates any barriers to learning and takes steps to overcome these. In all subjects, the content of the curriculum is planned precisely. Plans set out the key knowledge and vocabulary pupils will learn and when. Staff teach with skill and enthusiasm. They have expert subject knowledge and impart this clearly. Pupils learn an exceptional range of vocabulary. They use it with confidence to explain their knowledge. Checks on pupils' learning and understanding are a routine part of every lesson. If needed, lessons are adapted so pupils continuously build on their learning. All pupils gain a strong and secure body of knowledge by the end of Year 2.

Expectations for all pupils are consistently high. This includes for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school identifies and meets the needs of these learners swiftly and accurately. Consequently, these pupils make strong progress across the curriculum. They play a full and active part in school life.

Reading has the highest priority. The phonics programme is delivered to an exceptionally high standard. Most pupils have secure phonics knowledge by the end of Reception. Pupils in key stage 1 continue to develop their knowledge and read with accuracy and fluency. Frequent checks identify anyone at risk of falling behind. Support is immediately put in place so pupils can keep up. Reading books are very well matched to the sounds pupils know. Pupils are keen to show off their wonderful library and classroom reading corners. These are full of high-quality texts, which

pupils are excited to read. Pupils are keen to talk about the books their teachers are reading to them.

Children in Reception have an extremely positive start to their education. The environment enables them to develop their confidence and independence. For example, paint is available in child-sized hand-pump dispensers. This means children do not have to wait for an adult; they can choose their own colours and get on with learning. High-quality language is promoted throughout the environment and modelled by adults. Children learn to express their ideas clearly. They develop considerable knowledge across all areas of learning. They learn how to manage their own emotions, negotiate and compromise.

Opportunities for pupils to develop their character and self-worth are plentiful. The school carefully plans a broad range of rich and varied experiences. Pupils proudly take on leadership roles such as eco, school or diversity councillors. They learn about fairness and sustainability. Pupils recognise difference in the school community. They feel valued and able to express their own identities freely at school, confident they will be accepted. Pupils say, 'It is okay for everyone to be themselves at Crabtree'. Clubs like yoga, chess and nature crafters help children to develop their interests and talents.

All leaders, including the trust and local governing board, work effectively together. They are united in the school vision and aims. Leaders care about and value their staff. Training and well-being are priorities to secure a stable workforce and the highest standards of teaching. Staff are highly motivated and take enormous pride in their jobs. The local governing board knows the school really well. It has the expertise to be able to challenge and support the school to be the best it can be.

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	140707
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10255030
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	178
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Deborah Thompson
CEO of trust	Matthew Kleiner-Mann
Headteacher	Emma Simmons
Website	http://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

The 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 design and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about

the curriculum, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of work. The lead inspector listened to pupils from Years 1 and 2 read to an adult.

- Inspectors also reviewed curriculum plans in design and technology and history, along with talking to pupils about these subjects. They also looked at workbooks for geography, religious education, personal, social and health education, and English.
- 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.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders and the leader for SEND. They also met with members from the local governing board and trustees, including the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors met with staff to talk about the curriculum, workload and the behaviour and personal development of pupils. They also met with groups of pupils to talk about learning and well-being.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement and minutes of meetings of the local governing board. Attendance records were checked.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at playtimes and lunchtimes and talked to pupils about behaviour, bullying and welfare.
- Inspectors considered the 173 online responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, including 117 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and the 123 responses to the online questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Karen Stanton, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lucy Roberts

Ofsted Inspector

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