



Crabtree Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117287
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280033
Inspection dates 29 June 2006 to 30 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Helen Ranger AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Crabtree Lane
School category	Community		AL5 5PU
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582 623501
Number on roll	253	Fax number	01582 623455
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Janet Purvis
Date of previous inspection	14 March 2000	Headteacher	Mr. Ian Patrick

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The rest, about 10%, are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds and very few need help to learn to speak English. Pupils' socio-economic circumstances are mostly favourable. A lower than average proportion has learning difficulties. Most pupils transfer from the neighbouring infant school and their attainment on admission is above average. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with many good features. Its own evaluation is that it is a good school, but inspectors consider that, not enough pupils especially the most able make consistently good progress. In recent years, the oldest pupils have generally attained above average standards but only made satisfactory progress compared with their attainment at the start of Year 3. There are indications of recent improvement, but the school has rightly identified that its pupils could do better, especially those who are capable of reaching the higher levels in writing and mathematics. The new headteacher has taken swift action to make sure all pupils do well. This has been effective in ensuring that teaching and learning are now good and that teachers carry out more regular checks on each pupil's progress. These measures need to be implemented rigorously to ensure that standards and progress are improved. The subject leaders are beginning to monitor the teaching, the curriculum and pupils' achievements more effectively. The school's curriculum and care arrangements are good and promote pupils' personal development well. The high attendance levels and pupils' understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles are outstanding. Pupils' attitudes to school are good, as is their behaviour. The school has made adequate improvement since its last inspection in 2000. The effectiveness of leadership and management is satisfactory at present because the significant changes to staffing, assessment and monitoring introduced during the past year have yet to have a full impact on improving pupils' progress. There is an obvious determination among staff and governors to raise standards further and a growing understanding of how this needs to be done. Progress can already be seen in the overall quality of teaching and in pupils' writing standards. Factors such as these show that, with its current team of staff and governors, the school has a good capacity to improve further. It gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress made by the more capable pupils in writing and mathematics.
- Ensure that the systems for assessing and analysing pupils' achievement are used rigorously by all teachers and contribute to improving progress and raising standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school's performance in the Year 6 national tests has been above the national average in most recent years. However, within this positive picture, pupils' achievements have mostly been only satisfactory when compared with their attainment in the tests taken when they were in Year 2. In 2005, standards were high in reading and science, as they had been for several years previously. Performance was not as good in writing and mathematics, and most of the school's challenging targets for this Year 6 group were not met. The current groups of pupils continue to reach above average standards and there are recent indications that rates of progress are improving. For example, teachers have focused on pupils' writing this year and their assessments of the current

Year 6 show that standards in writing are rising. This is partly because the improved use of assessment means that teaching now caters more effectively for individual needs. School data show that pupils with learning difficulties make at least sound progress, but the more capable pupils do not always reach sufficiently high levels in tests or teachers' assessments. This is now being tackled by the improvements to teaching. The overall progress made by all pupils and, in particular the higher attainers, needs to improve for pupils' achievement, and the school's overall effectiveness, to be judged better than satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy school and attendance is high. Pupils behave well, both in school and in the spacious play areas. Incidents of bullying are rare and pupils say that there is always someone they can turn to if they have a concern. Pupils who are new to the school find other children kind and helpful. They have a voice in the way the school is run through the school council where, for example, they have been involved in the planning of an outside quiet area. Older pupils take responsibility around the school, for instance, by helping in the office at lunchtime. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Their effort and achievement are rewarded and celebrated and they appreciate this. Assemblies offer good opportunities for reflection and are planned to include the festivals of the major world faiths so that pupils gain a good understanding of the diversity of cultures in British society. They have an extremely good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and enjoy the many opportunities for physical exercise that are offered. They contribute to their community by raising funds for a range of charities, often on their own initiative. They are prepared well for future life by their good levels of basic academic skills and their ability to work together.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is improving and is now good and helping pupils to progress well in lessons. It reflects the positive impact of the recent monitoring and support of teachers to eliminate any unsatisfactory practice. It has not yet had a full impact on pupils' longer-term achievements, especially those of the older pupils. The consistency of good teaching now needs to be maintained for this to happen. Teachers work well with support staff to plan and provide engaging and effective lessons that make learning fun. Good quality materials and a fast improving use of information and communication technology (ICT) make an important contribution to this. Pupils know exactly what they are required to learn, enjoy their work, and benefit from well structured feedback. The quality of teachers' questioning is good and this helps to consolidate and extend pupils' thinking. Overall, work is now well matched to pupils' needs which ensures that most make good progress, no matter what their needs. The

assessment systems that are being developed are more precise than they were, and have the potential to provide very clear information on the effectiveness of teaching and pupils' progress. Teachers increasingly use this information to inform their planning of activities. For all pupils' achievements to be consistently good, they now must use assessment information more effectively to ensure that higher attaining pupils are challenged to reach their capabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It provides a wide range of stimulating and worthwhile activities, well matched to the abilities and needs of pupils. These enable them to make overall satisfactory academic progress and achieve good personal development. Recent and continued planned improvements to the library and ICT facilities have been beneficial, and good opportunities are provided to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects. Active links with other schools in the local network provide a chance for gifted and talented pupils to work alongside peers with similar abilities in other schools. The recently gained Healthy Schools status, which incorporated a gold award for the school's travel plans, combines with opportunities such as cycling proficiency training and comprehensive physical activities to supplement pupils' academic learning well. Significant additional activities, including lunchtime and after school clubs, educational visits, outside visitors and theme days to broaden pupils' horizons, provide very effective enrichment of learning. Opportunities for competitive sport, playing and singing in the school orchestra and choirs, and participating in drama productions also widen their interests.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school is a happy, friendly place in which good relationships and well focused pastoral support help pupils to grow into well rounded and confident individuals. Pupils know they are safe and feel they can get help and advice if needed. There are good practices for getting to know pupils before they transfer from the neighbouring infant school, for settling them in, and to support and guide them well as they move through the school and on to their secondary education. The improving arrangements for academic assessment and target setting mean that this aspect of pupil support is now good. Staff are vigilant in ensuring that pupils are properly supervised and kept safe at all times. Comprehensive arrangements for child protection are in place. Robust risk assessments, particularly for school visits, help to secure pupils' safety and welfare when off site. Parents are generally positive about the partnership that the school nurtures with them and certainly feel that their children are well cared for.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

At present, leadership and management are satisfactory in terms of their impact on overall achievement. The new headteacher has established a clear direction for how the school will develop over the next few years and his plans are clearly focused on improving pupils' achievement. He has worked with the staff to bring increased rigour to how pupils' and teachers' performance is checked and improved. These self-evaluation systems are a new experience for some of the staff, but the initiatives have already started to have a proven impact. For example, teachers have been helped to eradicate weaknesses in their classroom practice. Subject leaders have started to analyse pupils' achievement in more detail and identify how it can improve. To aid its development, the school seeks the views of parents and other interested parties reasonably well. There are effective partnerships with organisations such as other local schools that contribute well to its curriculum. While most parents' views are positive, a minority express concern that the school does not always take sufficient account of their views on any planned changes. Governors make a good contribution to management. They are led very well by the chair and vice chair. They are valued by the school and are knowledgeable, supportive and questioning. Since its last inspection, the school has continued to promote pupils' personal development well, but has not always been ambitious enough about their academic achievements. There is now an obvious aspiration to ensure that all pupils are included and catered for equally well, such as through the new pupil tracking systems and the initiative on provision for gifted and talented pupils. With its current team of staff and governors and its renewed focus on high achievement, the school shows a good capacity for further improvement.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your welcome and help when we visited your school recently. A particular 'thank you' goes to the school council for taking time to talk to us. This letter is to tell you some of the most important things we saw during our visit. It was obvious to us that you enjoy school and get on well together. The fact that attendance levels are so high is proof of how you take advantage of everything the school offers you. The staff give you a good range of interesting activities. We enjoyed seeing Year 5's Victorian Day, the Year 6 cycling training and all the outdoor sport that is available. You are fortunate to have good teachers and all the adults in your school look after you well. Mr Pattrick has brought in some new ways for the teachers to check that each one of you is getting on as well as possible and they need to make sure they use these checks regularly. We think these arrangements are good and will help you to make better progress in your work. We were particularly impressed with the standards you reach in reading and science. You and your teachers have spent a lot of time this year working on improving your writing. Well done with this and keep up the good work! We think that you could also do even better in mathematics, especially those of you who find the subject quite easy. We have asked your school to keep making sure that you all do as well as possible in writing and mathematics. We hope those of you who are soon leaving Crabtree are happy in your new schools and that the rest of you keep enjoying all that your school offers you.