



Crabtree Infants' School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117312
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280038
Inspection dates 28 February 2006 to 1 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Joyce Cox LI

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	4 to 7		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582 623597
Number on roll	180	Fax number	01582 623450
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs.Fiona Green
Date of previous inspection	14 March 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Jane Whitehurst

Age group 4 to 7	Inspection dates 28 February 2006 - 1 March 2006	Inspection number 280038
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average Infant school is situated in Harpenden in Hertfordshire. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage with a very small number of pupils coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. Fewer pupils have learning or physical difficulties than in most schools. Children's attainment on entry to the Reception classes varies from year to year but is usually above average when compared to that of children of a similar age. There has been a significant turnover of staff recently and both the headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher are new to their roles 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. Inspectors' views differ from the school's opinion that its effectiveness is good. This is because although standards are above average at the end of Year 2, pupils' achievement is only satisfactory as their attainment on entry to the Reception classes is above average. Most parents are happy with the school, which is popular in the local community. Quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. From an above average starting point on entry Reception children achieve satisfactorily and virtually all attain the expected levels on entry to Year 1. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been above average for several years in reading, mathematics and writing. Standards declined in the 2005 national tests, particularly in writing, where pupils achieved average standards. The school has correctly identified the need to improve pupils' achievement in writing throughout the school. Increased use of information and communication technology (ICT) in all subjects is another area for improvement. The quality of teaching varies throughout the school but is overall satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the headteacher, governors and senior leaders are currently developing systems to look at and evaluate all aspects of the school's work. Subject leaders' roles have improved since the last inspection. However, more work is needed to make sure that they play a full part in raising pupils' achievement in their subjects. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, although standards are above average overall, they have dipped since 2000. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory and is enhanced by its participation in a national programme designed to improve leadership at all levels. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards and achievement in writing throughout the school by increasing opportunities for all pupils, particularly higher attaining pupils, to write in different ways
- raise standards and achievement in ICT by making sure that it is used more in all subjects
- continue to establish rigorous systems for senior leaders and governors to look critically at all aspects of the school
- carry on improving the way subject leaders influence standards and achievement in their subjects and areas of responsibility.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children's attainment on entry to the Reception classes is above average. Across the school, pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make satisfactory progress overall. Standards have been above average at the end of Year 2 in reading, mathematics and writing. In 2005 standards dipped in all subjects compared to previous years. This was particularly noticeable in the number of pupils attaining above the expected level in writing. The school has begun to put suitable measures in place to make sure that writing standards are higher in the 2006 national tests. Children's

achievement is satisfactory in the Reception classes. They make good progress in learning to select their own resources and to organise their own learning, but would benefit from an increased focus on developing their writing skills. The Reception classes' tracking system shows that most children are likely to attain the required standards in all areas except for writing by the time they enter Year 1. Years 1 and 2 pupils make satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Handwriting is beginning to be taught regularly, but not all pupils present their written work neatly. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve satisfactorily because they are quickly identified and supported effectively by teachers and teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils demonstrate a lively and enquiring approach to their learning. They say that they feel safe in school and that there is always someone they can turn to if they need help. They enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their above average attendance. They generally behave well and show consideration for other members of the school community. School councillors take their responsibilities seriously and feel that their views are listened to. They have, for example, recently helped to organise a cake stall to raise money for charity. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Their cultural development is satisfactory, but improving, as pupils enjoy the experiences of theatre visits and multi-cultural celebrations such as Chinese New Year. The school has attained the Healthy Schools Award and pupils demonstrate a good understanding of eating healthily and the need for physical exercise. They make a good contribution to the community through collections for charities and taking part in a local music festival. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in reading, writing and mathematics, which gives them a sound basis for their future education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and there are examples of good practice. Reception children have good chances to plan and select their own resources in an exciting learning environment. They now need to be taught how to record their learning more effectively, particularly their writing. The main problem with the teaching is the way in which teachers plan to meet various pupils' learning needs. This is particularly true in writing and one of the reasons why writing standards have dipped recently. More able pupils in all year groups are not always challenged to write in a variety of different ways. In the best lessons teachers use questioning and discussion well to make pupils think carefully. There are useful targets that help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils with learning difficulties enjoy all lessons and make satisfactory progress because they are supported sensitively and effectively by a talented team of teaching assistants. The new headteacher has

worked very hard to devise a range of systems for measuring and tracking pupils' progress. This assessment information is beginning to be used to set targets and to direct additional help to individuals or groups.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. Children in Reception classes are given stimulating and purposeful adult-led and independent activities in most areas of learning. However, children's early writing skills are not developed fast enough and do not take sufficient account of their skills on entry to school. The outside environment has been developed to encourage pupils to take part in physical activities. There is a suitable focus on reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2, and most pupils progress satisfactorily. The school has significantly improved resources and provision for ICT. Nevertheless ICT is not used sufficiently across all subject areas and more able pupils could attain higher standards than they do at present. The school supports pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities satisfactorily, with staff, pupils and parents involved in setting relevant targets for their learning each term. The school promotes a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Staff plan a good range of special events, visits and visitors, which broaden pupils' experiences and understanding of topics they are studying.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Parents rightly say that their children have settled very quickly into the Reception classes because of the high level of care given by the staff. Arrangements for child protection are strictly implemented and health and safety issues are dealt with well. Procedures to promote good behaviour are consistently applied by staff and monitored well. Improved assessment procedures have been developed for reading, writing and mathematics. From this year, assessments are tracked more rigorously to ensure that most pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Pupils are informed about how well they are doing from teachers' marking and the recent development of pupils' targets is beginning to help them to know how to improve their work. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are monitored satisfactorily and given additional support to suit their particular needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher has worked hard, since her appointment, to improve provision in some significant aspects. For instance, she has succeeded in making all staff more aware of the crucial part they all have to play in school improvement. She has also implemented effective changes to curriculum planning and the way in which pupils' progress is recorded. The quality of self-evaluation is satisfactory. Together with the leadership team and as part of a

national initiative she has begun to introduce systems to look at and evaluate the work of the school. This work needs to continue to make sure that the school is very clear about its priorities for improvement. Subject leaders' roles have improved since the last inspection, but as yet they do not all have a complete understanding of ways to improve achievement in their subjects. Parents are consulted about school improvement and the vast majority of parents are happy with what the school provides. The governance of the school is satisfactory. The chair of governors is an experienced governor and provides good support. Other governors are relatively new to their roles and responsibilities, but are beginning to gain a clearer understanding of the strengths and areas to improve in the school. Many of the strategies currently in place to improve the school are relatively new. Therefore the capacity to improve is satisfactory.

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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?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	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	2	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	2	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	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	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	3	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	3	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 welcoming us to your school when we visited. It was good to talk to some of you and to watch you working and playing. This letter is to tell you about some of the important things we saw. You are lucky at your school because the headteacher, teachers and all the other adults look after you all well. They encourage you to be happy at school, to be healthy and to stay safe and they make sure you learn exciting new things and have lots of visits and visitors. Your behaviour is good and this makes it easier for the teachers to teach and for you to learn. You told us you liked arts week and playtimes and being on the school council and working to get the Golden Bin and Golden Boot awards. Your teachers are keen to make the school even better for you. We think that to do this the headteacher, governors and all staff need to carry on looking at ways to improve the school. It would be good if the teachers make sure that you practise your writing more. Also, as the Year 2 pupils told us, it would help if computers were used more in lessons. It was so good to find out that all of you are happy and enjoy school and that your parents are happy too. Keep working hard and being good at Crabtree.