



Crofton School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 100747
Local Authority Lewisham
Inspection number 285874
Inspection dates 20–21 September 2006
Reporting inspector Meena Wood HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Manwood Road
School category	Community		Brockley
Age range of pupils	11–16		London SE4 1SA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8690 1114
Number on roll (school)	900	Fax number	020 8314 1859
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ms Pauline Morrison
		Headteacher	Ms Monica Duncan
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	20–21 September 2006	285874

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Crofton School is an average sized school specialising in arts. Boys significantly outnumber girls. Most pupils' attainment is below average when they start school. A high number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. A sizeable proportion have English as an additional language needs and one tenth of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. The school draws over half its pupils from Black minority ethnic groups and about one third of pupils from other minority ethnic groups.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to achievement and standards and the quality of teaching and learning. Whilst showing improvements recently, the school is presently providing an inadequate quality of education.

Crofton School is emerging from a difficult and turbulent period. There are some important factors that demonstrate that it has the capacity to improve. The headteacher's clear commitment to the quality of the pupils' education has resulted in the recent appointment of a highly competent leadership and management team that has raised staff morale. She has sustained a rigorous focus on managing pupil behaviour and exclusions more effectively through the work of the Inclusions Panel, but more remains to be done. Around the school and in many lessons, pupils' behaviour is now satisfactory and, in some cases, good. Since the last inspection, attendance has improved and is now satisfactory and the punctuality of younger pupils is good. Pupils are safe and well cared for and the support of vulnerable pupils is good.

The school has recognised that it has to tackle the underachievement of the majority of pupils, especially in the core subjects of mathematics, English and science. Significantly large groups of minority ethnic pupils, Black Caribbean and Black Other boys, do not make sufficient progress and are not as successful as they should be, in GCSE examinations. The school accepts that where teaching is inadequate, it is because teachers are not aware of pupils' attainment levels or specific learning needs when planning lessons and they have low or inappropriate expectations of pupils' academic abilities. A new and improved procedure recently in place for tracking pupils' academic progress and raising pupils' aspirations is helping pupils better understand how to achieve their academic targets. Teachers now identify underachievement and set challenging targets for all pupils, and especially for high achievers. A renewed focus on raising standards has led to some improvements in results for Year 9 in the last two years.

The school has prioritised the appointment of more skilled staff to support pupils with learning difficulties, and those with English as an additional language and literacy needs, to improve their achievement. Effective leadership by senior staff of teachers is resulting in good practice in a few subjects, for instance in music, design and technology, where pupils learn well.

The school understands the challenges it faces and its self-evaluation has correctly identified the key shortcomings. The senior management team is very successfully implementing an appropriate intervention plan that is correctly focused on driving up standards rapidly for all pupils, through stimulating and engaging lessons.

The school receives good guidance and support from London Challenge, the local authority and consultant headteacher. Parents are mostly supportive of the changes,

as one parent noted, 'Together, we can make Crofton a better school with some hard work.' However, some parents feel they have insufficient information about their children's progress. The school has been recently successful in gaining Specialist School status for Arts. The spirit of change and development is reflected in one Year 11 pupil's comment, 'Recently things have changed a lot and I would no longer be prepared to accept a D grade'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in mathematics, English and science particularly in Years 7 - 9.
- Ensure that teachers use information about pupils' prior attainment to set challenging targets and plan better lessons so that all pupils make greater progress in learning.
- Increase the academic support in lessons for pupils with additional English language and literacy needs and for those with learning difficulties and disabilities so they achieve their potential.
- Develop more responsive and better channels of communication between parents and teachers about their children's progress.
- Ensure that pupils' behaviour continues to improve and that exclusions are reduced even further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement is inadequate. Standards are not high enough and are exceptionally low. Most pupils arrive in school with below average attainment in Year 7 and make little progress between Years 7- 9. The rate of progress improves slightly and is satisfactory between Years 9 - 11. However, there are significant variations for specific groups of pupils and within the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Those of average ability attain standards which are significantly below average. Large groups of pupils, especially those from Black Caribbean and Black Other backgrounds make substantially less progress than other groups. Pupils with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language do not achieve as well as they should.

In 2006 the rate of progress in English, mathematics and science improved and standards have risen slightly in 2005 and 2006. However, standards overall remain significantly below average. The proportion of Year 11 pupils gaining GCSE grades A* - C is also significantly below the national average and the results show that more able pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Results for each of the last two years indicate that four-fifths of pupils leave the school without an A* - C GCSE in English and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development and well-being of pupils are satisfactory. Pupils' behaviour in lessons has now significantly improved. Pupils are polite and move around the school in an orderly way. A Year 7 pupil's parent reported her satisfaction with the prompt way her child's bullying had been dealt with by the school, and the letter of apology he received from the bully.

The moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. Assemblies are well structured but, pupils are not given adequate opportunities to develop spiritual awareness. This was also identified at the last inspection. Year 10 pupils learn well about their roles and responsibilities as citizens, through participating in the local young mayor elections. Pupils gain in confidence during inter-school debating, public speaking competitions, and through community fund raising events. Pupils' team working and organisational skills for future employment are well developed through the work experience programme. Continuing weaknesses in pupils' basic literacy, numeracy and information communication and technology (ICT) skills are however, a significant hindrance to them fulfilling their potential in the work place.

Overall attendance is now satisfactory. However, a minority of mostly Year 10 and 11 pupils consistently arrive late. In a good example of where teachers and managers are beginning to tackle poor punctuality, two Year 9 girls who were persistently late to school last year, now arrive in time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate, as in most lessons, teachers are not aware of pupils' levels and abilities, and generally have low expectations of their potential. Pupils make inadequate progress, as the tasks set are too simple and they do not acquire the required standard of skills, knowledge and understanding. Effective leadership by senior staff has begun to tackle these issues through training for staff and through the provision of information on pupils' prior attainment. The success of these interventions were seen in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, where a teacher developed pupils' thinking skills well and pupils were able to work out good expansions of simple equations. Pupils in a Year 10 French lesson practised useful speaking and listening skills in paired role plays and clearly enjoyed their learning, displaying a real sense of achievement when they were assessed correctly. Homework is now set regularly in some subjects. A Year 9 pupil stated that this was in tremendous contrast since the previous school year when he had had very little homework.

The following examples illustrate some of the weaknesses in teaching. Pupils in a Year 11 GCSE English class did not know why they had spent so long on the beat of Shakespearian sonnets, when they wanted to spend more time on understanding

language and meaning. In one ICT lesson a high attaining pupil finished her pie chart on the computer very quickly and played computer solitaire while waiting for the next piece of work. Teachers do not use appropriate learning materials to support those with English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties. In a Year 8 English lesson, one pupil with dyslexia who clearly enjoyed writing a short story, was unable to spell the simple key words he needed, and was unable to read the story out loud when asked to. A significant number of teachers lack confidence and do not allow pupils to work together in pairs or groups in lessons, and too few check the learning of the less able pupils. Assessment and marking of work does not sufficiently inform pupils about their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Overall, the curriculum enables pupils to benefit from a satisfactory range of both academic and vocational subjects. A growing number of vocational courses in Years 9 and 10 in GNVQ health and social care, applied science and business are starting to meet the needs of older pupils, with a significant number of pupils enjoying their part-time attendance at the local college. Ten minute tutorial sessions at the start of the school day are satisfactory overall. Nevertheless pupils' experiences vary from well-structured and useful activities in Years 7, 8 and 9 to less effective sessions in Years 10 and 11 where teachers have no clear, planned work scheme or learning materials in place. Provision for lunchtime clubs and enrichment activities is satisfactory, but take up of these is low. There are no after school activities. The school is planning to expand these as the school's recent accreditation as a specialist arts college takes effect. Provision for physical education is currently unsatisfactory because rebuilding works have reduced access to the school's facilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory. Arrangements for child protection are well established with satisfactory health and safety procedures. As a result, pupils learn how to conduct themselves safely, and they understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. Insufficient attention is given to pupils' personal needs, for example, the poor condition of the toilets. The work of the Inclusion Panel enables pupils to receive good support in and out of school from professional agencies and staff and parents are kept informed. Looked After pupils receive good support. A police officer works closely with the school as part of a Restorative Justice scheme and regularly counsels pupils on personal safety matters.

The number of teaching assistants is inadequate to meet the needs of all pupils with learning or language difficulties but they provide good support wherever possible. Improved recent procedures to track pupils' academic progress and to guide them on how to reach their targets are at an early stage of implementation. To raise pupils' and parents' aspirations, teachers are setting challenging targets for all pupils, with

most success among the more able in Year 10. Pupils receive appropriate information and guidance in relation to Year 9 choices and post 16 courses.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The head teacher has been in post for six years, but, during her statutory leave of entitlement, there was some instability in the school leadership. On her return, she showed great determination and commitment in leading the school in very challenging circumstances. As a result, governors and managers worked effectively together to put in place clear and supportive procedures through a policy on behaviour for learning. This ensured that pupils are not excluded unfairly, their learning is not disrupted and that parents are more involved in the process.

During the last year, the head teacher initiated significant external support to help tackle the underachievement of pupils and to raise the quality of pupils' learning. The school has worked well with its partners on the professional development of staff. In a short period, these developments have begun to improve pupils' behaviour and some aspects of academic progress.

The quality of the learning environment for pupils is unsatisfactory and the school has commenced an ambitious building project to remedy the weaknesses. The headteacher has significantly changed the staffing of the school. Since July 2006, a clear and very supportive management structure has been in place. Teachers are now motivated by the highly competent and enthusiastic managers. The new senior management team are successfully raising staff's expectations of pupils' capabilities and have already improved the quality of teaching and learning in some subjects.

The capacity for the school to improve is satisfactory. Leaders and managers have placed a very sound intervention plan in place, that is addressing the key weaknesses and they receive good support from external agencies. Teachers and pupils in the school report that the school has undergone a significant culture change in the last few months, with much better communication and improved behaviour. 'I feel like I am in a different school now!' said one teacher.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Following our recent visit to inspect your school, we would like to thank you for your contribution. We enjoyed sitting in your lessons, talking with you and looking at your work. I am now writing to let you know about our findings. We are concerned that your school is not providing you with a good enough education. Your school requires a Notice to Improve. There are a number of reasons for this:

- Since the last inspection, some teachers and managers have not worked effectively enough to make the improvements needed to help you achieve better results.
- Many of you are not doing as well as you should and your progress is often slower than it should be. Your results in most subjects, although these have improved in 2006 in Years 9 and 11, are still very low.
- In many subjects, many of you who require extra support in English are not receiving it.
- Most of you need greater challenge to help you to succeed.
- In music and design and technology, however, you appear to enjoy lessons and are more confident.

In order to improve, you will need to do your best. Your teachers do care about you, and take many good steps to look after you. The school's new management team know what they need to do next and are working hard with your teachers to improve the quality of your education. Many of you told us that you feel the school is 'different' this term. Some Year 11 pupils told us, 'We now know our predicted examination grades, we get more homework this term and the behaviour has improved in lessons!'

You need to carry on supporting and working with the adults in the school. You can do this by arriving on time, attending regularly, paying attention in lessons and behaving well. You can involve your parents more, have higher expectations of yourselves and share your ideas for improvements with the school and take greater responsibility in making Crofton School a good place to learn. We hope that you will do well in the future and realise your ambitions. We wish you all a very successful coming academic year.

Yours sincerely

Meena Wood

(Her Majesty's Inspector)