



Crossways Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109049
Local Authority South Gloucestershire
Inspection number 288263
Inspection date 7 March 2007
Reporting inspector Carole Skinner

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Knapp Road
School category	Community		Thornbury
Age range of pupils	4-7		Bristol BS35 2HQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01454 867280
Number on roll (school)	164	Fax number	01454 867280
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Steve Forecast
		Headteacher	Valerie Quest
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
4-7	7 March 2007	288263

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This popular school is situated on the edge of the small market town of Thornbury to the north-west of Bristol. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. There is also a lower than average percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. A very small minority of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. Pupils start school with a wide range of attainment but the majority have above average knowledge and skills on entry. The school currently holds a Basic Skills Quality Mark, a national Healthy Schools Award, Active Mark Gold, Arts Mark Gold and a Green Flag Eco Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school whose motto, 'Standing on Tiptoe', reflects its commitment to providing the very best education possible for its pupils. Staff and governors maintain a relentless focus on seeking ways to improve the quality of pupils' learning. Their rigorous evaluation of the school's effectiveness identifies accurately where improvements could be made but is sometimes a little too conservative in recognising the school's many strengths. What makes Crossways stand out from the crowd are its innovative and ground breaking approaches to developing pupils' learning and their understanding of how they learn. This results in outstanding achievement and exceptionally high standards, not only in reading, writing and mathematics, but in many other areas of the curriculum. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT), art and physical education (PE) are also very high.

Excellence in academic achievement goes hand in hand with outstanding personal development. This begins in the reception classes where very high quality provision gets pupils off to a flying start, not only in laying the foundations for children's future learning but also in developing excellent personal and social skills. Pupils are happy and confident individuals who have great self-esteem and a maturity beyond their years. Their behaviour is exemplary and their enjoyment of learning first-rate. They thrive in the school's warm, nurturing atmosphere as a result of the exceptionally good care, guidance and support they receive. Pupils throughout the school make exceptionally good progress because of the excellent teaching and outstanding curriculum, both of which place great emphasis on developing independence and thinking skills. Ever ambitious to enhance its provision, the school continues to improve strategies for teaching writing and for developing problem solving skills in mathematics, recognising that these have not always been fully effective. Teachers make lessons exciting and involve pupils in a wide range of exciting 'hands-on' activities that take very good account of their existing knowledge and capabilities. Many opportunities for collaborative work and an extensive range of additional activities, such as visits, visitors and themed events, make a huge contribution to the quality of pupils' experiences.

The school is successful because of its outstanding leadership and management. Dynamic and forward-thinking, the headteacher, deputy head and governors provide clear-cut strategic direction for the school's development. The teamwork approach to curriculum management maximises the considerable expertise of teachers and support staff. The school is aware that this successful collaborative approach is not yet fully effective and this is being monitored closely. Parents are very supportive of the school and an overwhelming majority appreciates and values what it offers their children. Their views, and those of their children, are regularly canvassed to inform planning decisions. Crossways has very high aspirations for the future and its staff and governors have the expertise and determination to achieve them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine its systems and strategies for teaching writing and developing pupils' problem solving skills in mathematics
- Improve further the effectiveness of curriculum management teams

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils reach exceptionally high standards in a short space of time and their achievement is outstanding. By the end of their first year in school, most children exceed national expectations and are already working on aspects of the National Curriculum. Their personal and social development is particularly good. The school has a strong tradition of very high standards in reading and mathematics, while those in writing, although higher than in most schools, have lagged behind a little. 2006 saw a slight dip in standards in writing and mathematics. The school immediately analysed the reasons for this and took immediate steps to tackle identified weaknesses in boys' writing and in problem-solving in mathematics. The impact of this action is already evident in the standards being achieved by the pupils currently in Year 2, which are exceptionally high in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Pupils also do very well in ICT, art and PE where the quality of teaching and the curriculum has achieved national recognition. The current focus on developing pupils' thinking skills is further reinforcing their outstanding progress evident in all areas of the curriculum.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because it sits firmly at the heart of the school's philosophy of education. Pupils respect and care for each other, for adults and for the environment. They are enthusiastic learners and caring friends. Their positive attitudes towards school are reflected in their very high attendance. Pupils behave responsibly and know how to keep themselves and others safe. As school and class councillors they discuss and make suggestions about ways of improving the school. Pupils enjoy fresh fruit every day and drink plenty of water. They know exactly why the contents of their lunchboxes are healthy (or not!) and keep fit by taking advantage of the many opportunities for physical exercise that the school provides. They take part in competitions and performances within the local and wider communities and show initiative in raising money for charities. Pupils' efforts in caring for the environment recently earned them the Green Flag Eco Award. The very wide range of skills that they acquire equips them exceptionally well for lifelong learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning have a number of outstanding features. Teachers create a vibrant and stimulating environment where colourful and informative displays support and celebrate pupils' learning. They establish a calm, purposeful working atmosphere in each classroom where pupils feel safe, well supported and confident to express their opinions and explain their thinking. The whole-school focus on what contributes to successful learning is evident in teachers' high quality planning which clearly sets out the objectives for each lesson and how they will be achieved. They are constantly striving to further refine and improve strategies used. Pupils are actively involved in their own learning from the outset, rather than being passive recipients. They help to assess their own and others' learning and explain to the teachers how they could make lessons even better. Teachers have very high expectations of every pupil and are meticulous in recording and tracking their progress. They ensure that activities are matched very well to the needs and capabilities of pupils with learning difficulties. This enables these pupils to make excellent progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is exceptionally well planned to promote pupils' personal and academic development. It focuses strongly on developing essential literacy and numeracy skills within a broad framework that gives equal emphasis to the arts, humanities and physical education. Personal, social and health education is given high priority and the development of ICT skills is a significant strength. The recent introduction of 'Philosophy for Children' is an exciting initiative which fosters creativity, thinking skills and problem-solving. Speaking and listening skills are developed exceptionally well through drama, role-play and opportunities for discussion in pairs and small groups. An extensive range of enrichment activities includes after school and lunchtime clubs, visits, visitors, links with local schools and businesses and special events. These give pupils a wealth of additional experiences that enhance their learning and expand their horizons. The 'Maths Puzzle Day' which happened during this inspection was a fine example of how the school makes the most of outside expertise to add a further dimension to pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding personal development stems directly from the exceptionally high levels of care and support that the school provides, together with its first-rate systems for ensuring that pupils receive the best possible academic guidance. All of this begins with the excellent induction procedures that help pupils to settle into school in the early days. Pupils' welfare is always given the very highest priority. Rigorous procedures

are in place to ensure their health and safety. For example, the annual 'Safety Week' is planned to raise pupils' awareness and help them to make sensible choices. Strong links with parents and external agencies underpin the excellent support for pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils with special gifts and talents are nurtured and given opportunities to extend and use their skills. Rigorous assessment procedures and termly tracking of pupils' progress provide high quality academic support to all pupils and quickly alert teachers to those who may be showing signs of underachievement. These pupils are given prompt attention through additional support and sometimes tuition in small groups.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school has successfully maintained its focus on raising achievement and enhancing pupils' personal development despite a number of barriers to progress over the past couple of years. Staff turnover and absences slowed the pace of development for a short time but the school has quickly recovered its momentum. The many strengths evident at the last inspection have been very successfully built on and developed further. Governors make an outstanding contribution to the school's strategic development, holding it to account through rigorous monitoring and review while supporting the staff in their efforts to raise achievement. The head teacher and deputy head, both highly skilled practitioners, lead from the front with a clear vision for the school's future development. Action taken to address identified weaknesses is prompt and very effective. The restructured management teams, although still evolving, bring their considerable combined expertise to bear on improving teaching, learning and the curriculum. There is a sustained focus on further enhancing their impact. Ever alert to new initiatives at both national and local level, staff and governors carefully weigh up the pros and cons before embarking on a new course of action, making sure that whatever they do will result in enriching the pupils' learning and their personal development. There is no hint of complacency at Crossways, rather an unceasing quest for improvement and a track record showing an outstanding capacity to improve further.

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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I really enjoyed visiting your school, coming into your lessons and talking to some of you about your work. Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming and for telling me what you liked about your school. I was very impressed by how well you behaved and particularly by the way you look after each other. You obviously enjoy being at school and I can see why. It is an excellent school which is giving you an outstanding education. You enjoy learning a great deal because the teachers make lessons fun. As a result, you all make excellent progress and achieve very high standards in your work. There are also lots of exciting things to do outside of lessons, especially sports clubs, and music and drama events, which many of you really enjoy taking part in. You have obviously learned a lot about how to keep healthy and you try hard to eat healthy food. I was pleased to see that you get plenty of exercise and that you eat fruit every day. All of the adults look after you very well and help you to become confident and happy young people. The teachers and governors who run the school do a really good job. They keep checking to make sure that you are all making good progress and they are always looking for ways to make learning more interesting for you.

At the moment your teachers are helping you to get even better at writing and at problem solving in numeracy. Everyone is working hard together to make sure that you are learning as well as you possibly can. I have asked the school to do all that it can to make these two things even more helpful to you.

I am sure you will continue to help your teachers to make Crossways an even better school in the future. Keep working hard – but above all, enjoy learning and taking part in all the exciting activities.