



Croftlands Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112198
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289199
Inspection dates 13–14 February 2007
Reporting inspector Lynne Read

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Oakwood Drive
School category	Community		Ulverston, Cumbria
Age range of pupils	7–11		LA12 9JU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01229 894183
Number on roll (school)	226	Fax number	01229 894185
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr Terry Gannon (Vice Chair)
		Headteacher	Miss Jackie Dower
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils come to this two-form entry school from a wide range of backgrounds; the proportion claiming free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is about average although a higher percentage than usual have statements of special educational need. The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds although a few are of Caribbean or Asian heritage. A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. Croftlands Juniors is federated with another local school; the headteacher works for part of each week in both schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The inspectors' judgement of the school's effectiveness is lower than the school's own evaluation. This is because the latter concentrated too much on provision rather than on outcomes, in terms of pupils' achievement. When pupils enter Year 3, standards are above average. Achievement over time, however, is not good enough and standards are broadly average by Year 6. Results have been declining over a two-year period because of underachievement in the lower junior classes. The school's monitoring and tracking procedures identified the issue after the first year's decline but managers did not act quickly enough to rectify matters.

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing 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 pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards are highest in English, where improvements in the teaching of writing have led to better progress. In mathematics and science, achievement is significantly below average. There is evidence of improving progress in mathematics this year but work to identify and rectify the underachievement in science is slow. Many improvements have been made this school year in teaching. It is satisfactory overall and good for the older juniors, where work is carefully matched to pupils' differing needs. The good assessment information and new system of setting targets are helping most teachers to set higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Some teaching, however, does not provide enough challenge for pupils and there are inconsistencies in practice. These weaknesses are preventing the school from fully addressing the legacy of underachievement and driving up standards.

The curriculum is satisfactory and profitable links with outside agencies and people provide additional experiences for pupils; for example, a local minister regularly takes assembly. Extra support for underachieving pupils has been introduced but, where groups are withdrawn from lessons, pupils sometimes miss their full entitlement to the curriculum and their learning can be compromised. The good amount of available assessment information is used well in some classes to provide valuable guidance for pupils on how they can improve. In other classes, the guidance is not sufficiently explicit to be of much help. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory and there have been good improvements in behaviour. Pupils say they feel safe and that they enjoy their lessons. Throughout school, a sound emphasis on personal and health education ensures that pupils understand how to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Improvement since the previous inspection is inadequate because standards and achievement have declined. Leadership and management are currently satisfactory and well supported through the local authority's leadership programme. A much faster pace of improvement is now evident, although it could be better in science. Better progress is resulting from the improvements in teaching and management but the full impact, in terms of higher standards, has yet to materialise. In light of the recent record

of action and initial improvements, Croftlands has sound capacity to improve further. Finances are planned for and spending monitored, but because achievement is not good enough, the school gives inadequate value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement, especially in mathematics and science, by improving teaching so it is consistently good across the school.
- Accelerate the rate of improvement in science.
- Ensure that the pupils withdrawn from class for extra support receive their full entitlement to the curriculum and that their learning in other subjects is not adversely affected.
- Extend the best practice of providing guidance for pupils so all have a clear idea of what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' attainment is above average when they enter the school. Standards in Year 6 have been declining over the last two years and were broadly average in 2006. Achievement is inadequate and pupils are not attaining as well as they should. This can be attributed in part to the movement of pupils in and out of school. However, it is mainly due to the fact that pockets of underachievement among pupils have not been detected or corrected early enough in the past.

Pupils are currently making satisfactory progress overall although there are some differences between subjects and year groups. Progress is best in English. The school is working to improve pupils' calculation skills in mathematics and has begun to develop their investigative work in science. The half-year assessments indicate improved progress in both subjects but there is still some way to go. Progress across the subjects is often good in Years 5 and 6 but, in 2006, was not rapid enough to make up for shortfalls in previous learning.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) and those who are learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Pupils who have a statement of special educational need progress well towards their learning targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Behaviour has been improved, with the rate of exclusions dropping markedly. No pupil has been excluded this year. Pupils say they find the 'worry box' system useful in helping them to resolve issues and they particularly appreciate the philosophy sessions which 'get you thinking and grip you in'. Pupils feel safe and are secure in the knowledge that adults in school are always ready to help them. Attendance is above average and pupils say they enjoy school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and promoted by visits and visitors as well as by teaching. Pupils follow the school rules and know right from wrong. Opportunities for collaborative work and play help to develop satisfactory social skills. An understanding of economic well-being is soundly supported through opportunities for decision-making, for example, through the pupil council, and by taking responsibilities around school. These measures also ensure that pupils take an active role within the school community. Pupils know how to follow a healthy lifestyle and, for example, they take good advantage of the out-of-school sporting activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall; it is generally good for the older juniors. It is not yet good enough, however, to overcome the legacy of underachievement at the school and to ensure that pupils achieve all they are capable of.

In the upper juniors, lessons are well planned to meet the individual needs of all pupils and provide good challenge. Pupils capable of higher attainment are best able to take advantage of the provision and often make very rapid progress. Teachers constantly check learning and take time to address the gaps in pupils' previous learning. While this is good practice, the necessary revision work slows down the overall rate of learning.

The school's monitoring records show that teaching and learning in the lower juniors have improved but there are still some issues to resolve. Teachers do not consistently use the good assessment information that is available to set work at different levels and sometimes the more able pupils are not fully challenged. Marking is variable, although it does not always provide pupils with a clear guide on how to improve. Too many worksheets are used and these restrict the development of writing and independent working skills. Expectations of presentation vary and some teachers accept untidy or careless work.

Across the school some improvements are not embedded fully. For example, in English and mathematics lessons, check lists are used very effectively to help pupils learn and assess their own progress. This good system is used only in one year group for science.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and mainly meets the needs and interests of the pupils. Some effective changes have been made to boost pupils' progress, such as setting pupils by ability in English and mathematics and providing booster sessions out of school hours. However, other changes are not so successful. Some pupils are withdrawn from class for small group work and they sometimes miss parts of important lessons. This is creating the possibility of further gaps in learning for the future. Younger juniors have too few opportunities for writing across the curriculum and, in all age groups, there is insufficient use of computers in lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Children are well cared for and sound efforts are made to keep them safe and healthy. Procedures for safeguarding and child protection are up to date. Children who have LDD have sensitive and effective support and the staff go to considerable lengths to secure additional equipment or specialist help to meet individual needs. Several parents praised this aspect of the school's work.

New guidance has been developed to help pupils improve their work; it is satisfactory but not good enough yet to overcome the legacy of underachievement in the school. In some classes, pupils have useful guidance to help them improve, which is derived from careful assessments of their work. This is especially effective in closing some of the gaps in previous learning. In other classes, however, the guidance is too general to make a difference.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

With the improvements recently made, leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher recognises that mistakes were made in the past, which meant that the school did not act swiftly enough after the dip in achievement in 2005. Although better assessment and tracking of pupils' progress were introduced, the necessary improvements in teaching came too late and there was a further dip in 2006. The tracking system has now been further improved and there are clear expectations of each pupil's progress, along with regular assessments to ensure that learning targets are met. Groups of pupils who still need an extra boost to learning are identified and receive additional help. The managers for English and mathematics monitor performance effectively. They are aware that further work is needed to ensure that all improvements are fully embedded. The monitoring of provision and outcomes in science is developing but not yet fully effective. The progress of pupils in the withdrawal sessions is checked to some extent but the full impact of missing some important lessons is not evaluated fully.

Among staff, there is a strong commitment and determination to raise standards and improve achievement. Good advantage is taken of local authority support. In the main, parents have positive views of Croftlands but there are some concerns about the shared leadership role of the headteacher, who spends part of each week in the federated school.

Governance is satisfactory and ensures that all statutory requirements are met. The governors have developed a much more active role in monitoring standards and achievement, making this the priority at each meeting.

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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	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	3

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	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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

Croftlands Junior School

Oakwood Drive

Ulverston

Cumbria

LA12 9JU

13 February 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you very much for the warm welcome and for helping my colleague and myself when we came to visit your school. This is what we found out.

Croftlands Juniors is a friendly place and we really appreciated your help in finding our way around. You enjoy your learning and take good advantage of extra activities outside school hours. The adults in school work hard to make sure you are happy and safe. You like your teachers and we saw the older pupils enjoying some challenging lessons. Please thank your parents for sending us lots of replies to the questionnaire. They are generally pleased with the school.

Because the standards you reach are not as high as they should be, we have given Croftlands a 'Notice to Improve'. This means that your school will be inspected again in the next two years. However, your progress in lessons is improving - well done - and with continued hard work you can do even better. We know that some of you enjoy extra challenges so we have asked your teachers to make sure that these are always included in your lessons. We know how helpful you find your 'success criteria' cards and some of the learning targets you have so we have asked your teachers to make sure that everyone has them in their English, mathematics and science lessons. Some of you work in groups outside the classroom and we think it's important that you don't miss parts of lessons, such as information and communication technology, that so many of you really enjoy. We have asked your teachers to check on this.

Thank you once again for the interesting conversations we had and for letting us know your views so clearly. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Lynne Read

(Lead inspector)