



Crakehall Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121483
Local Authority North Yorkshire
Inspection number 292132
Inspection dates 20–21 November 2006
Reporting inspector Elizabeth Charlesworth

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	The Green
School category	Voluntary controlled		Crakehall, Bedale
Age range of pupils	5–11		North Yorkshire DL8 1HP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01677 422515
Number on roll (school)	68	Fax number	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr David Smith
		Headteacher	Mrs Alison Cole
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
5–11	20–21 November 2006	292132

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small village primary school in a mixed, though relatively advantaged, rural area, as reflected in the very low proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is higher than average, there are no pupils with disabilities. All pupils are of White British heritage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Pupils take great pleasure in coming to this good school, where there are many outstanding features. Children in Reception start the day with a song of greeting before going into a multi-lingual register routine. This is just one example of the exceptional provision in Foundation Stage where children prepare very well for later stages of their education. Attendance rates are very high and the small proportion of absence is all accounted for. Enjoyment is palpable and pupils throw themselves into work and play with great enthusiasm. This means they achieve well, reaching standards that are above average by the time they leave in Year 6. Teaching is exciting, demanding and innovative and pupils relish the varied activities that help them learn so well. Class Three are still buzzing from their residential visit to Marrick Priory and this is giving a genuine stimulus to their writing. The school places great emphasis on creative subjects: art, music, poetry and dance so that children in Reception and Key Stage 1 are already very proficient musicians. They bring to school well developed social and communication skills and staff build on these so that the music making and residential visits, for instance, round off their development into mature young people ready for the demands of secondary school.

All staff are united behind the headteacher in their aim 'to develop the whole child through providing a secure, stimulating and caring environment' (school prospectus). Parents are overwhelmingly positive in their support for what the school does for their children. A very small number reported that they were not entirely happy with the way the school rewards effort or listens to their concerns. However, pupils themselves said how well cared for they are and that if, for instance, anyone is bullied - a rare event - it is swiftly dealt with so that pupils do not feel intimidated or fearful. The school has responded to the challenge to provide healthy food by adhering to local authority guidelines to produce tasty and nutritious meals. Pupils' clean plates are testimony to its success and they take seriously the value of a healthy diet, explaining how it has helped to improve behaviour and learning in the afternoon. Furthermore, when one class were doing a survey to help them understand fractions, several pupils said they ate very few sweets because they did not want to have to visit the dentist too often. The importance of exercise is not overlooked and pupils reported how they enjoy taking part in physical education and sport and those who live near enough come to school under their own steam.

As a small school Crakehall values its partnership with members of the local and wider community. It regularly supports trainees from the local authority and higher education: the school is always first on the scene with new initiatives, keeping teaching fresh with a very strong impact on learning. Close links with the parish church foster spiritual growth. Children take part in services, fund raising and charitable giving and welcome members of the church into school to take assemblies and other activities. Recently the pupils have become quite a hit at the Wensleydale Festival, carrying the honours in choral speaking. Supporting the excellent behaviour and very positive ethos that prevails in the school, pupils are very conscientious in their duties as school councillors, playground buddies and general helpers.

Staff get everything ready at the start of lessons so that when, for instance, Reception children arrive each morning they know to check straight away what they have to do and get on with it quickly. These good habits continue right through the school so that by the time pupils reach Year 6 they have faced up to the responsibility they must take for their learning.

The school has gone through a period of instability in its staffing but the present team is now in its second year and the effectiveness of their corporate approach is evident in improved teaching and learning. However, the impact of earlier staffing problems has affected the older pupils most, though they are making up for lost time and are well on the way to even better achievement. Systems for monitoring the performance of the school are in their infancy and though they need time to settle in are already bringing about improvements to the curriculum, teaching and learning and achievement. Improvement has been greatly assisted by the way the governing body links its members to specific areas of the school. This support is invaluable to the headteacher in making improvements. Considerable additions to accommodation and resources since the previous inspection have sustained these shoots of new growth, which show that the school has good capacity to bring about even further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Evaluate the impact of monitoring systems established by the new teaching and management team and governing body to maximise the impact on pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children start the Reception class their attainment overall is what is expected nationally of four year olds. They stay in the same class and progress very well to the end of Key Stage 1 where results in national tests are consistently well above average. In recent years progress through Key Stage 2 has been variable, caused by changes in staffing that have adversely affected it, and published results set against the national picture were barely above average in 2005. However, during 2005 changes to staffing were taking place and now the new team is established, progress in Key Stage 2 is much improved and is now good. Results in 2006 were up on 2005 and the school's tracking shows that pupils who will take the tests in 2007 are making good progress with a few already at the expected level for the end of Key Stage 4. Higher attaining pupils, including children in Reception, all make good progress because they are allowed to organise their own work and are not limited by any modesty in teachers' expectations. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because of the very strong support from teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils have an extremely well developed sense of their own worth and this is the cornerstone of their high self-esteem and confidence and their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school puts great store by the arts and pupils take part in activities as varied as choral speaking and African drumming, widening their understanding of the world around them. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit from the biennial visit to Marrick Priory where they reinforce their team working as well as strengthening their spiritual life through the denominational foundation of the centre. They leave school having made excellent progress in developing the personal qualities that will support them to contribute to the community effectively in later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. The most striking thing about pupils' excellent learning is their sense of responsibility and perseverance and these are the qualities that are quickening the pace of their already good progress. This is because teachers and assistants prepare very thoroughly beforehand so not a minute is lost in getting started. When deciding on learning outcomes there is no limit to what staff expect, upholding the maxim, 'why not?' Pupils approach new learning with enthusiasm because they know they will be expected to make decisions. Questions that are answered yes or no are followed up with 'why?' or 'why not?' Pupils do not mind being put on the spot because they know if they get something wrong they will be helped and that way learn more.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. A themed approach to planning provides pupils with many excellent opportunities to learn about the world in which they grow up. Pupils and staff alike are very enthusiastic about this way of working because it means they can share ideas across the school and, importantly, make visits together that enhance pupils' understanding. It is also leading to improvement in writing across the school because it gives purpose to writing as well as providing staff with a framework for developing technical expertise. Pupils are very busy at lunchtime - choir, computer club, cup stacking, recorders and working with visitors such as Young Enterprise. The Green Club is particularly anxious to get on with the task of setting up a wild life area with trees and pond.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of pupils are given the highest priority by the school and are good. Pupils say they have very good opportunities to bring into the open any problems they have with relationships by sitting down as a class and talking about them. It is a tribute to the high quality support, through cooperation between outside agencies, parents and staff, that pupils with learning difficulties do as well as they do. Government requirements for the health, safety and welfare of pupils are all in place. Good systems for tracking pupils linked to analytical marking is identifying where pupils need to place their efforts in order to make progress. All the signs so far are that, since the new team has been in place, these systems are working well and the school is looking forward to seeing the confirmation of this in still higher standards this year.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good with some outstanding features. All staff take on an area of responsibility. The headteacher's commitment to professional development means she makes very good use of mentoring and opportunities for professional development in order to support staff and develop their skills. Attendance at external courses is given very careful consideration to assess personal needs against the demands of school and curriculum. Expertly led by the headteacher, everyone is honing their skills in monitoring their areas of responsibility and growing in confidence daily. Overall their view of the success of the school is accurate but they were too modest in judging Foundation Stage, teaching and learning and the curriculum.

The team is bound by a unity of purpose and the headteacher leads by example to inspire and motivate staff and pupils. Admirable support comes from the governing body, which, under the steadfast leadership of the chair of governors has undergone a transformation in parallel with the staff. A small school puts many financial strains on the budget but astute management and support from Friends of Crakehall School means pupils do not lose out: indeed, when faced with budgetting challenges the maxim is 'why shouldn't we?' The school gives excellent value for money.

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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?	2
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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?	2

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?	2
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	2
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	2
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

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I very much enjoyed my time with you. Crakehall is a good school and in some ways it is outstanding. I particularly like the way you are all so enthusiastic about your work. You have lots of very good ideas when it comes to writing and I took great pleasure in reading about the visits you have made, such as to Marrick Priory. Taking your responsibilities as good citizens very seriously, you make sure the school runs well, through the school council and the Green Club. I wish I could have heard the school choir because if the very good singing and playing in Reception and Years 1 and 2 are anything to go by you must be very good.

I have asked your headteacher and the staff and governors to make sure you make even better progress by making sure they all play their part, with you, in deciding what aspects of school life work best and what need to be improved.

You of course can help by keeping up your very good attendance and continuing to do your best.

Good luck with the wildlife area and the tree planting.