

Crab Lane Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105465
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	308861
Inspection dates	16–17 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Aitken

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	320
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Edith Garvey
Headteacher	Mr David Potts
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2004
School address	Crab Lane Higher Blackley Manchester Lancashire M9 8NB
Telephone number	0161 7402851
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large primary school, situated to the north of Manchester. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small but increasing number of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage. A new senior leadership team has been formed over the course of the last two and a half years. The school has gained the Manchester Inclusion Award and the Manchester Healthy Schools Bronze Award.

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 special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The standards pupils reach by the time they leave school are exceptionally low in all subjects. Pupils in Key Stage 1 underachieve and do not make the progress needed to prepare them adequately for learning in Key Stage 2. This pattern is maintained during Key Stage 2, although girls do a little better than boys, especially in English. Achievement is, therefore, inadequate and pupils are ill-prepared to meet the demands of the secondary curriculum.

Some satisfactory features in areas such as pupils' personal development and the pastoral care for pupils have been maintained since the previous inspection. The school has successfully employed a number of strategies such as SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) to boost pupils' sense of well-being and to create a pleasant, ordered community. Consequently, pupils behave well. Pupils have a satisfactory appreciation of how to live healthily and how to stay out of harm's way. However, the overall quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Good practice in teaching is not shared effectively and most teaching is not good enough to ensure pupils make consistent progress in their learning. Furthermore, the curriculum does not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to develop basic skills. The school has an adequate system in place for tracking pupils' progress, but in practice, this does not support pupils' learning effectively.

Leadership and management are inadequate overall. Although leaders have brought about some improvements in pupils' personal development, progress in improving pupils' academic standards has been too slow. The sustained pattern of pupils' underachievement has not been reversed. Resources are not deployed to full effect because appropriate priorities are not systematically evaluated prior to setting new ones. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. Partnerships with outside agencies are satisfactory overall; they are more successful in supporting pupils' pastoral well-being rather than their academic achievement. Involvement in projects with the local authority to raise standards has yielded limited results. Expenditure is much higher than average and academic outcomes are inadequate. Consequently, the school offers poor value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage provides a satisfactory education for the younger children. The Nursery is full time but a considerable number of children join Reception from other settings and a few of these children have no pre-school educational experience. When children join the Nursery their skills are well below those expected for their age. Most children make good progress in their personal, social, and mathematical development, but progress in literacy is less marked. By the time children join Year 1 most are working towards the Early Learning Goals and few achieve the higher levels. Children's attitudes to learning are positive and nearly all are able to work effectively in groups, pairs or individually. The curriculum ensures an appropriate balance between child-initiated and teacher-led activities and is particularly effective in supporting children's personal development. Teaching is satisfactory, but opportunities for promoting

children's learning through outdoor play are limited. Improved arrangements for monitoring the work of staff and children's progress have recently been implemented. As a result, staff are now more aware of what further actions are needed to support the progress of individual children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and eradicate underachievement in all subjects.
- Ensure the actions leaders take have a significant impact on improving the performance of the school.
- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching and learning.
- Ensure the curriculum meets the needs of all learners and effectively develops pupils' basic skills.
- Ensure the quality of academic guidance is robust enough to ensure all pupils know how well they are doing and how they need to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards are exceptionally low and achievement is inadequate. When children join Year 1, levels of basic skills are below national expectations in numeracy and well below in literacy. Standards in Year 2 in 2007 were exceptionally low, following a declining pattern. Pupils lag more than a year behind their peers in all aspects of their work. Standards in the current Year 2, while remaining low, show some signs of recent improvement due to improved staffing arrangements. Nevertheless, pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 is hampered by a legacy of prior underachievement. Although some pupils manage to achieve at the higher level 5 in Year 6, the rate of progress for the vast majority is much too slow. While there has been a small improvement in standards in the past two years, the school's own evidence indicates that this will not be maintained for the present pupils in Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make inadequate progress. The school's implementation of an intensive reading programme in Key Stage 1 this year is helping targeted pupils to improve, but the impact of other support programmes is limited. The achievement of pupils with English as an additional language is too variable.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Most pupils enjoy school and feel part of a safe and secure community. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, with strengths in the moral and social aspects. These strengths are reflected in pupils' good behaviour, their politeness and friendliness and their willingness to cooperate with each other and with adults. As a result, everyone pulls together to make the school a happy place. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, although the concentration of some boys occasionally wavers. Attendance is satisfactory overall, but there are variations between the year groups. Pupils make effective contributions to their school through the school council and the eco-council. They carry out a range of duties responsibly and older pupils enjoy the opportunity to support the younger ones as play buddies. Participation in initiatives such as HF4U (Higher Futures for You) has raised aspirations for older pupils. However, low standards in basic skills and restricted opportunities to develop independence in lessons do not prepare pupils adequately for the next stage in their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Relationships in classrooms are good. This is because teachers use other adults, praise and encouragement of pupils, and arrangements for paired working effectively. While there are elements of good teaching, these are not consistent enough to ensure satisfactory progress for pupils. Too much of the teaching lacks pace and teachers' expectations are too low. On occasions, teachers' knowledge is insufficient so the demands on children are not challenging enough. Teachers' planning is not securely focused on the development of skills which pupils are expected to acquire. Consequently, some lessons lack direction, and not enough use is made of assessment to promote pupils' learning. Teachers do not use data on pupils' progress effectively to plan to meet the needs of all learners. While some marking is good, overall it is of inconsistent quality and too often it is insufficiently related to pupils' targets to enable them to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is inadequately matched to the academic needs of learners because it is too broad and general in application. Leaders are only in the initial stages of evaluating the impact the curriculum has on pupils' progress. As a result, the programmes which exist to support individuals or groups of pupils are either at a very early stage of development or not precisely matched to their needs. The curriculum is ineffective in reinforcing basic skills, as standards are equally low in the foundation subjects. While work on cross-curricular writing is yielding positive results across the curriculum, especially in science, there is no discernable impact on standards. Resources to support teaching and learning in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved, but insufficient evaluation of standards has been carried out. The curriculum makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils both enjoy and acquire confidence from the school's good enrichment programme.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Appropriate arrangements for safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of pupils, including child protection, are in place. The school has satisfactory strategies to support the pastoral needs of vulnerable pupils through links with outside agencies. There is a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to feel valued and have their achievements recognised and, increasingly, account is being taken of their views. Arrangements for promoting attendance are satisfactory. However, the school's tracking system is limited in its use as a tool for recording or checking pupils' progress over time. Its effectiveness in setting clear, realistic targets to support pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 is compromised by the underachievement in Key Stage 1. This results in a confusing mix of targets, both 'in-house' and aspirational, which reduces leaders' ability to identify underachievement accurately and to direct resources to tackle it.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

In the last two years senior leaders have developed a clearer view of the main things that need to be done to improve standards and they demonstrate a willingness to bring this about. They have not been able to translate this into effective action to make a significant difference to academic outcomes. Leaders at all levels do not know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well enough; monitoring systems are ineffective and, as a result, self-evaluation is inaccurate and uncertain. The roles of many of the middle leaders, including their responsibilities for monitoring standards in their subjects, are underdeveloped. This results in inconsistencies in practice. Equality of opportunity for all learners is not effectively promoted as gaps in provision are not identified or addressed adequately. The governing body, which has been reorganised recently, has been successful in eliminating a substantial financial deficit. It is becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the school through closer working with the local authority and is now asking more searching questions of school leaders. It is discharging its statutory responsibilities satisfactorily.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
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?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

We visited your school recently to find out how well you are learning. We thank you for your warm welcome, especially the two pupils who gave us a short tour of the school. We enjoyed meeting them and the other pupils for a longer conversation. You told us a lot of useful, positive things about your school.

By the end of our visit we were able to agree with you on some things. Pupils and adults all get on well with each other and so the school is a happy, safe place for you. You behave well. You have a good range of after-school activities which help you enjoy school and develop self-confidence.

We also found out quite a lot of things that need to improve. Because of this, we have judged that your school requires special measures. At present, your standards are too low and your progress is too slow. To tackle this your school will need extra help from people outside the school as well as hard work from you and your teachers. Inspectors will visit the school to check that things are improving.

We have asked the headteacher and staff to make some improvements. We want them to make sure you do better in all subjects. We want the teachers to move lessons on at a faster pace and plan more sharply to make sure each of you can make better progress. We have asked the headteacher to make sure you have better opportunities in other subjects for improving your skills in English, mathematics and ICT. We have also asked him to ensure that the arrangements for checking on your progress work better and help you to understand how well you are doing in your learning. Finally, we have asked the headteacher to check carefully that all the actions he and the staff take bring about the improvements needed.

You can help by further improving your attendance levels and keeping up the positive attitudes you have to your learning.