

Cranborne Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117369
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312589
Inspection dates	4–5 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Roderick Passant

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	309
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Goldfinch
Headteacher	Mr Alan Cocker
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2002
School address	Laurel Fields Potters Bar Herts EN6 2BA
Telephone number	01707 652714
Fax number	01707 661074

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly above average in size. There has been a recent review of primary accommodation in the area and the school is currently undergoing a major building programme to accommodate additional pupils in September, following the closure of another local school. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average as is the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. About a fifth of the school are from minority ethnic groups. There are a very small number of looked after children and a few pupils who are at the early stages of English as an additional language. Children join the school with a range of skills and abilities but overall these are lower than those normally expected of three and four year olds, especially their language skills, emotional and social development.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Because of good leadership and management, Cranborne has developed rapidly to become a good school. Pupils make good progress academically and in their personal development. Most parents support this view. In their responses, they stressed the positive impact of the headteacher's outstanding leadership on the school. They identify how 'special' the school is and how much their children enjoy and feel proud of their school. This improvement has been brought about because there is strong teamwork amongst all school staff, who share a common vision and high aspirations for the pupils. There is also, as expressed in the school's self-evaluation, 'a relentless focus on improving pupils' life chances. Because of the school's excellent use of targets and very close monitoring of pupils' progress, standards have risen. Children get a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage and this good progress and achievement is now effectively built upon across the school, although the rate of progress can sometimes vary. Teachers are held to account for the progress pupils make in their class and given appropriate support to ensure this happens. Effective strategies to boost achievement result in pupils being on track to attain above average standards at the end of Year 6. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

Pupils are learning to take responsibility for their own learning and for and each other. Behaviour is good. Pupils show a relaxed enthusiasm that stems from them feeling very secure and confident. They enjoy school very much – reflected in their good attendance – because they recognise that teachers care about them a great deal and because lessons are interesting. There is an appropriate focus on developing core skills but there is also a good range of experiences and enrichment opportunities that make learning fun and enjoyable. A pupil said that 'learning sticks when you feel happy in a lesson.' Pupils make good progress because teaching is good and lessons are well structured. There has been good improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. However, the speed of recent developments, has led to some inconsistencies in approach in teaching that are resulting in some variation in the rate of pupils' progress. Underpinning the good quality of learning are the very positive relationships that teachers have with their pupils and the creation of an ethos in which pupils can ask for additional help without fear of ridicule. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress against their targets because teaching assistants provide effective support. All pupils in Year 6 show considerable maturity, demonstrated in the way that they manage their school council responsibilities and work with different year groups. Pupils relate to each other very well throughout the school, which fosters a strong sense of community and gives the school its 'special feel'.

This rapid improvement in the school has happened because leaders are very clear about what needs to be done in the school and able to look at it critically in order to identify the right priorities. Management of the school is very good. Despite major building works, the school operates effectively. It has retained its calm ethos, minimised effectively the disruption to pupils and managed to keep pupils' needs in focus. The school has been helped in this because the local authority has provided additional support to help manage the building programme.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children make good progress in Nursery and Reception because their needs are identified and met quickly. Most children reach the expected

levels by the time they move to Year 1. Staff work hard to ensure parents are fully involved in their child's development. There is good planning of indoor activities to promote a range of skills. The outside play area is still developing as the Foundation Stage expands into its new accommodation and is satisfactory at present. Very good emphasis is given to improving language and social skills, so that children develop confidence and their communication skills grow well. The quality of care and supervision is very good, with the result that children are happy and enjoy their first experiences of school. Leadership and management are very good and all staff work closely together, sharing planning and closely monitoring the progress that children make. Very careful and sensitive planning for the transition to Year 1 means that children move happily to the next stage of their education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Address variations in pupils' progress by developing even greater consistency in approaches to teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress and achieve well across the school, although the speed of progress tends to fluctuate. Strategies for improvement have been effective, leading in 2007 to a significant jump in standards in Year 2, where they were close to being exceptionally high, and in Year 6, where they were broadly average but significantly improved over the previous year. There was a marked improvement in attainment in mathematics in the national tests. The school is looking at how it teaches science, with a view to improving on its current average standards. There is an improving trend in English. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to attain standards that are above average overall. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as do those pupils learning English as an additional language. The school monitors and analyses all pupils' progress very carefully, particularly vulnerable pupils, to pick up early signs of underachievement and to provide appropriate support. The school is working hard to unravel why 2007 data indicated that girls and boys showed slightly different rates of progress across the school. Pupils' basic skills provide a sound foundation upon which to build their future school careers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school fosters pupils' sense of uniqueness well because it listens, values and acts upon what they say. The school council meetings involve the whole school and provide a very effective forum for all pupils to have a voice. Year 6 pupils lead these meetings confidently and pupils share ideas readily, listening to and respecting others' views and contributions. The school takes its responsibilities for making pupils aware of the diversity of society very seriously and, pupils report no racism in the school. They have a good understanding of how to take care of themselves and keep themselves healthy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall but not yet consistent across all lessons, which leads to some unevenness in the rate of pupils' progress. Staff have good, caring relationships with pupils. Pupils are valued, their views respected and, as a result, they contribute readily to class discussions. Teachers' good subject knowledge is evident in their use of key vocabulary and their good use of questioning to extend pupils' thinking and check their understanding. Teachers and support staff work well together with a clear and shared understanding of pupils' particular needs. Teachers' planning is thorough but their expectations for each lesson are not always shared with pupils in 'child-friendly' language. Classrooms are vibrant and attractive and displays are designed carefully to support effective learning. Learning is fun. The school provides effective support and training to staff to ensure that all groups of pupils are fully engaged in their learning. Greater consistency is needed in encouraging pupils to become more independent and to think more for themselves.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good because teachers plan activities that are exciting and relevant and pupils enjoy rich and varied experiences, in and out of classes, that inspire and motivate them to achieve well. There is appropriate emphasis on literacy, numeracy and personal, social and health education that is reflected in pupils' good progress in English and mathematics and good personal development. The school is now restructuring the curriculum to develop key skills across subjects with a particular focus on raising standards and achievement in science. There is good provision for different groups of pupils and 'catch-up' programmes are leading to rapid improvements.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect is good because staff know pupils well and assign a high priority to their care. Pupils feel confident that they can seek help and advice when they need it. Procedures for child protection and pupils' safety are very good. Attendance is monitored very well so that absences are swiftly followed up by the school. Good use is made of an extensive range of support outside of school to extend the care for pupils. Pastoral support is extensive and well managed. As a result, pupils feel settled and able to enjoy their learning. There is inconsistent use of assessment in the classrooms to help pupils improve their work. There are, however, very good systems to monitor pupils' progress, and data is used extremely well to set challenging whole-school targets to raise standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Although relatively recently established, the senior leadership team have grown rapidly into their roles and provide effective support, evidenced by the improvement in pupils' standards. The school has a very strong commitment to ensuring

all pupils do as well as they can. Improvements in the school have been rapid but the leadership has still to iron out inconsistencies and embed good practice. An important feature of the headteacher's outstanding leadership is the value he places on others' contributions. The result is strong teamwork across the school focused on ensuring that pupils get the best possible deal and the creation of a self critical, reflective, professional culture. The school has integrity of purpose and operates with honesty and openness. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have a range of professional expertise and skills. They are supportive of the school and most have undertaken training. The governing body has undertaken a self-evaluation but is yet to implement fully the identified priorities. The chair of governors provides close support to the headteacher.

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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.

Annex A

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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?	No

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

6 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cranborne Primary School, Potters Bar, EN6 2BA

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school. We enjoyed our stay very much. I have taken away many fond memories of your school, which will stay with me a long time. Probably the strongest impression was just how much you enjoyed school and how relaxed and confident you are. It's a shame I'm not going to be in assembly when Mr Cocker plays his tune on the violin! My particular thanks to those Year 6 pupils who gave up part of their lunchtime to talk to us. I was very impressed by your thoughtfulness. What you had to say was very helpful.

You have helped to create a good school. You behave well and you show that you look after yourselves and each other well. I agree with you that learning in your school is fun and it is clear from just walking around the school why this is the case. (The smell of pancakes made my tummy rumble!) Teachers help you to learn well and as a result, you make good progress across the school. Sometimes your progress is uneven and I have asked the teachers to see if they can find ways to make your progress a bit smoother. Year 6 are on track to do well in the SATs. Well done! Its good to hear that you have an adult to go to if you had a problem and that a teacher would deal with it. You clearly get on with each other. Teachers care about you a great deal and work very hard on your behalf. They also keep a close eye on how well you are doing and expect you to do as well as you can, because rightly, they aim high.

The school council meetings I saw were particularly impressive. Year 6 ran them in a very grown up way and you all listened carefully to each other's point of view. You are all aware of the future development of the school and it was great to hear you putting forward really good ideas to welcome the new children. I'm sure from listening to what you had to say that you will do all you can to help them settle in quickly.

All good wishes in your future school careers.

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector