

Crosshall Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110892
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325252
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Heather Weston HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	470
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Roger Palmer
Headteacher	Mrs Julia Elliott
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2006
School address	Great North Road Eaton Ford St Neots Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE19 7GG
Telephone number	01480 475972
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Crosshall Junior School is much larger than most schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, and the proportion from minority ethnic groups are very small compared to schools nationally. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is small. An average number of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, mainly for autistic spectrum disorders, behavioural, emotional or social difficulties and for moderate learning difficulties. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average.

The school has a number of awards, including the Teaching Award for Sustainable Schools, the Artsmark Gold Award, and the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

As parents say, Crosshall Junior School is 'a fantastic school, enriching the lives of both the children and community', where children 'thrive' and where they develop 'socially, educationally and personally'. Another parent recognises that it is an 'excellent school which is well led from class to headteacher'. Leadership is visionary. The strong principled leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher is reflected throughout the senior leadership team and their vision is shared by staff. Pupils thrive because they know that each and every one of them is highly valued as a member of the school community. They are also challenged. As one pupil said, 'Learning is exciting because it is hard. We get choices, and you learn it yourself,' - a response which clearly shows the clever planning of their teachers.

Standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 have been above average over a period of years, with very high standards in English. Standards in other areas of the curriculum such as art and performing arts are exceptional. The extensive opportunities in the performing arts are reflected in the school achieving the Artsmark Gold Award, for a period of nine years. Standards in mathematics and science last year were lower, showing satisfactory progress. Leaders responded to this and took action to restore better progress in these areas. This included a programme to further improve the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, this is now outstanding, progress is at least good in all areas, and the quality of learning is second to none. Pupils know that 'getting stuck' is a key part of learning. They have real confidence in their ability to 'get unstuck'. The achievement of all is valued highly, and in the words of another parent: 'The children are made to feel proud of their achievements, however small.' Pupils know this and say, 'Everyone in this school has a talent which they can demonstrate.'

The curriculum is amazing. The focus on the LIFE curriculum (learning, innovation, fun and excellence) means that pupils have highly developed investigational, problem-solving and thinking skills and are highly competent in their use of information and communication technology (ICT). Their application of these skills can be seen in lessons and is reflected in their work. All aspects of pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The care, guidance and support of pupils is also outstanding. The school's response to pupils' problems is exemplary, as they know that emotional issues prevent learning. Staff help pupils overcome these barriers, for example teaching techniques to control anger or to promote assertiveness. The use of assessment to promote progress is highly effective, and is being sharpened further by the use of new specialist assessment materials, which identify the next steps needed for pupils to make further improvement. These are now used extensively in writing, but have yet to become embedded in mathematics and developed across the curriculum.

Community cohesion is outstanding. Pupils show an acute understanding not only of their own needs but also of the needs of others. The school has worked with schools overseas in the Comenius project, a project to promote global awareness, and has gained the International Award at the highest level. Staff work with partners locally, nationally and internationally to enhance learning. The impact of this work on resourcing and on learning is without exception. Because of the continual focus on improvement, the school's far-sighted vision and their ability to translate vision into reality, the school has outstanding capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to embed the use of the new assessment materials across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards overall have been significantly above average for a period of five years, and exceptionally high in English for two years. Standards in mathematics and science have been lower. As a result of action taken this year by the school, standards in these areas have improved. Evidence from the school's own tracking data, evidence from pupils' work in all year groups and observation of lessons shows that all current pupils are making good progress in all areas, including the core subjects. The very rich curriculum enables pupils to reach very high standards in other areas, such as ICT and media work. The level of pupils' understanding of learning is demonstrated by their extraordinary thinking skills and is the outcome of the emphasis placed on developing life skills. Progress in this aspect of their learning is quite remarkable.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Attendance is outstanding because pupils really enjoy coming to school and are highly engaged in their learning. They are enthusiastic, articulate and confident learners who work hard in lessons and concentrate for extended periods of time on solving challenging problems. They are skilled at evaluating their own learning, and make personal comments about their achievements in their 'Learning Passports'. There are plenty of chances for pupils to work together and they become very good at doing this. Pupils readily accept responsibility as play leaders, club leaders and school councillors who play an excellent part in improving their school. They are tremendously proud of their school and say that lessons are fun. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy, both through eating sensibly and taking exercise. Pupils know and understand classroom and playground expectations, so they behave very well, showing genuine politeness to adults and taking care of each other. Caring for and supporting each other is central to the ethos of the school. Consequently pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. They show great consideration for those less fortunate than themselves and they frequently organise fund-raising events for needy causes, giving money to charities of their own choice both within the community and for faraway places. They have good numeracy, literacy and ICT skills, which together with their ability to work both collaboratively and independently prepares them extremely well for life beyond school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils now experience very skilled, enthusiastic teaching which, because of its consistency, is building further on their good academic progress throughout the whole school. Pupils are very mature learners who have the personal resources to face new learning challenges. They want to succeed and are given wide-ranging opportunities to demonstrate that success. Planning refers to the 'learning journey'; it is a journey that teachers and pupils make together as partners. Adults listen to, value and incorporate pupils' ideas in the planned learning. Confidence is fostered extremely well so that pupils are able to think aloud, make mistakes, and try things out knowing this is part of the learning process. They are given the skills to evaluate and improve their work. The support of teaching assistants is particularly well targeted. They are very well

briefed and are extremely effective in both challenging and supporting pupils. Skilled questioning deepens pupils' understanding. Pupils grasp new concepts quickly because there is often practical exploration followed by carefully planned, structured progression so that pupils can apply their new knowledge. Investigations, first-hand practical and creative experiences, group work and the opportunity to rehearse ideas are all given consistent emphasis. Assessment is used extremely well to check on pupils' learning. Marking is diagnostic and lets pupils know how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is vibrant. It is engaging and relevant to all pupils, and provides outstanding opportunities for independent learning. It includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and teachers work hard to make significant links between subjects. There is a clear emphasis on meaningful activities linking learning to life which enthuse pupils. There are many opportunities for pupils to practise their key skills in literacy across the different subject areas. Opportunities for communicating ideas in a range of ways including using animation are an integral part of the planned curriculum. Performing arts feature extremely strongly in the curriculum. There are regular opportunities for public speaking, dancing, singing, and presenting work in different ways including the use of ICT. Provision for those pupils who find learning difficult and who have disabilities is good. An exceptional range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities greatly supports the pupils' high levels of enjoyment and good progress. The many varied visits to places of interest add another dimension to pupils' learning. A residential visit for each year group provides excellent opportunities for social development. There are attractive grounds, with good opportunities for exercise, and the well-stocked library stimulates enjoyment of books.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

All staff share a deep commitment to the pupils in their care and the school is highly inclusive. Staff work hard and effectively to minimise any learning or personal difficulty that a pupil is facing. The school has strong links with specialist agencies to support individual pupils. Pastoral care is excellent. Pupils say they feel safe in school. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are robust and careful attention is paid to ensuring that the school is a safe place, due to rigorous organisation and routines. The school monitors the progress of pupils carefully and uses this information to identify those pupils whose progress may be slipping. Teaching assistants have thorough knowledge of the various programmes used to support and accelerate these pupils' progress. Resources are carefully targeted to support pupils' needs. Pupils are given good academic guidance on how to improve their work. The school works closely with parents and pupils value the opportunity to continue their learning at home or with their parents at school, for example at Saturday school. There are good induction procedures to smooth transitions to this and pupils' next schools and Year 6 pupils feel very well prepared to take their next steps.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher, together with the deputy headteacher, leads the school in an unceasing and relentless drive to continually innovate and improve. All leaders demonstrate outstanding leadership and management. Responsibilities are distributed well through the staff team with an emphasis on shared decision making within a highly accountable structure. Self-evaluation is highly effective and accurate, and even pupils play their part, for example as Eco Warriors who monitor which lights are left on. They do not mince words at Crosshall Junior! Evaluation has the strap line 'measure, judge, change' but in the context of assured, positive, professional relationships. Staff are confident that although senior leaders have high expectations, they will be given high-quality coaching and training to enable them to carry out their roles. The result is a highly trained, highly valued and skilled workforce.

Senior leaders' decision to focus this year on moving teaching from good to outstanding has been highly successful. This, together with the introduction of the new materials for 'Assessing Pupil Performance' (APP), has resulted in outstanding progress in English. It has yet to be reflected fully in pupils' progress in all areas, in mathematics where the APP process has recently been introduced, and in science where the process is to be piloted. The school's systems for tracking and analysing data are highly effective and tied in with staff performance management. Targets are used well to support improvement.

Governance is outstanding. Governors are well-informed and knowledgeable. They truly fulfil their role as critical friends by giving a high level of challenge but also by giving equally good support. All aspects of resources are carefully evaluated and finances are very carefully and effectively targeted. As a result, the school provides outstanding value for money.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

3 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Crosshall Junior School, Eaton Ford, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, PE19 7GG

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your school recently and looking at all your interesting work. Thank you for making us so welcome, for talking to us and showing us your work. We think that your school is quite remarkable in the way it helps you to make decisions about your learning journey and to have such amazing learning skills. The way you make suggestions for your learning, work together and think about each other's needs is remarkable. We know that all your teachers have worked hard to make sure that they can give you outstanding opportunities to learn. So many of you let us know how great your school is, and we agree with you. It is outstanding. You have so many interesting ways to help you to learn, 'sketch, paint, listen to stories, observe, dance, play music, animate, perform, play games,' to name but a few. No wonder you say learning is fun!

Mrs Elliott and your teachers told us about the new approach to helping you know how to improve your work, called APP. Your teachers have used it for some time to help you in your writing and have started to use this in mathematics. We have asked them to carry on using them in mathematics and also to use them in other areas of your learning, such as science.

We know that you will be interested in helping your teachers do this as you are so good at real-life problems.

With best wishes

Heather Weston

Her Majesty's Inspector