

Cressing Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114832
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326073
Inspection dates	12–13 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Missin

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	143
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father John Corbyn
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Giles
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Tye Green Cressing Braintree Essex CM77 8JE
Telephone number	01376583397
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than most other primary schools. Children generally start the Reception class with knowledge and skills that are below those expected for their age, especially in number and language development. Many do not have any previous pre-school experience. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. Most pupils are of White British backgrounds and none is at an early stage of learning English. There are three official sites for traveller families in and near the village and currently 16 pupils with travelling backgrounds attend the school. A below average proportion is eligible for free school meals. The school has awards for Healthy Schools, ActiveMark and as an International School (Foundation Stage).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good education for its pupils. It has a positive ethos which promotes care and support of individual pupils with an increasingly effective drive to ensure they make the best possible progress in their learning. Parents are confident in the school's welfare provision and recognise it as a caring community. One said, 'This is a happy, friendly place. Staff are approachable and do take any concerns seriously'. Behaviour is good and the part that pupils play in promoting harmonious and respectful relationships for the benefit of everyone is exemplary. Pupils enjoy school, most come regularly and attendance is just above average. Pupils know how to keep safe and remain healthy and take good advantage of the many opportunities they are offered for vigorous physical activity.

Overall standards are broadly average, but all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those from travelling backgrounds, achieve well from their different starting points. In 2008, standards were below average in Year 2 but this represents good progress from these pupils' starting points and currently pupils are on track to achieve average standards again. In Year 6, they were above average in English and mathematics and average in science. Achievement is good in English and mathematics but only satisfactory in science. Here, topics are not consistently taught to a sufficient depth to challenge particularly the more able pupils and opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills through science are not always taken.

Leadership and management are good. The good improvement which the school has made since the last inspection shows that it is well placed to improve further. An important reason for the strength of leadership is the vision, drive and determination of the headteacher who leads the school well. She is well supported by other senior leaders and by an effective governing body. School evaluation procedures are robust and provide an accurate picture of the school's strengths and where it needs to improve. Improvement planning is clearly at the heart of the school's work. Staff has been more settled recently and teaching is good. Strengths lie in the positive way that pupils are managed, the enthusiasm and commitment to learning which this promotes and the effective development of pupils' speaking and listening skills. Another important improvement since the last inspection has been the more effective use of assessment information. Teachers are now using assessment data well to monitor progress and to set pupils' learning targets. Increasingly sophisticated assessment procedures, including the regular 'moving-on' meetings between school leaders and class teachers, are providing a clear picture of the progress made by pupils. Good additional support is provided for those who may not be making the best possible progress.

The good curriculum is well focused on developing literacy and numeracy skills and also on the promotion of pupils' good personal skills. Pupils have a good appreciation of some more distant cultures, for example, through their French lessons and visits to France and through links with a school in South Africa. However, they are less familiar with some of the lifestyles, cultures and religions of different ethnic groups in the United Kingdom. The school has planned impressive enhancements to make the curriculum more relevant and interesting, including an outstanding range and variety of lunchtime and after school clubs.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get a good start to their time at school and make good progress to reach broadly average standards by the beginning of Year 1. Children are settled well and effectively to school life and welfare procedures are effective. All adults welcome children warmly to the classroom and school routines and expectations are made clear. Good links are established with parents who are invited into the class each morning. Teaching is good. Where teaching is most effective, interesting activities are provided, for example, a challenge to sort a 'muddle' of shoes and Wellington boots really interested and engaged children whilst promoting their mathematical skills well. All adults work together as a team. Learning support assistants make a strong contribution to the quality of children's learning. The curriculum is well planned and provides a good balance between adult led activities and those chosen by the children themselves. There is appropriate opportunity for learning through play and outdoor learning in the developing outdoor activity area. Provision is managed well and improvement is planned through a clear and relevant action plan. Adults share the responsibility of assessing what children know and can do and are building up an accurate picture of standards and achievement upon which future planning is based. The school has identified the need to ensure consistency in assessment practices as a priority for the coming year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and accelerate the progress that pupils make in science by ensuring that topics are taught to a sufficient depth to challenge all pupils, particularly those who are more able.
- Ensure that pupils develop an awareness of the lifestyles, cultures and religions of different ethnic groups in the United Kingdom community.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall, standards across the school are broadly average but pupils' achievement is good. Achievement is good in English and mathematics but satisfactory in science. Although there is significant variation between standards in different year groups, most pupils begin Year 1 reaching broadly average standards. In 2008, standards in Year 2 were below average in reading, writing and mathematics, but these pupils made good progress and the current group are on track to reach average standards. In 2008, standards in Year 6 were above average in English and mathematics but average in science. The realistic targets for the current group are lower, but appropriately challenging given the starting points of the pupils. Pupils who need extra help with their learning and children from traveller families make good progress because of the good support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupil's personal development, including their social, moral and spiritual development is good. Behaviour in class and around the school is good. Pupils have a good understanding of the need for rules and the consequences of not keeping them. Relationships across the school are very positive and pupils work and play well together. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and are keen to do well. Attendance is above average, despite the sporadic attendance of some travelling

pupils. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy and a safe life and enjoy a range of energetic physical activities during school, in lunchtime and after-school clubs and through opportunities for inter-school sports competitions. Older pupils readily accept responsibility, for example, as school councillors, play leaders and school monitors. They proudly talk of the real difference they make to the smooth running of the school. Pupils' understanding of their part in promoting friendship and harmony in the school and village communities is excellent. For example, their part in ensuring that their peers from traveller families and other communities are fully integrated is impressive and highly valued by these pupils and their parents. However, their understanding of the traditions and lifestyles of other ethnic groups in our multicultural society is satisfactory. The good progress that pupils make in acquiring numeracy, literacy and personal skills provide a good basis for their future education and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers manage pupils well. Relationships within classes are very positive. Pupils feel relaxed, are ready to learn and are keen to do their best. An important strength is the way in which speaking and listening skills are promoted as teachers encourage cooperative work, use 'talk-partners' and undertake interesting discussions. Teachers use questioning effectively to extend pupils' understanding and they provide well organised, practical activities which support pupils' learning well. Pupils who need extra help are given good support by teachers and effective support assistants to help them reach their own targets. Topics in science are not always taught to a sufficient depth to extend the learning of more able pupils and opportunities to develop literacy and mathematical skills in this subject are not always taken. Sometimes lesson planning does not show clearly the activities planned for pupils of different abilities in the class.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides an effective focus on the provision of basic literacy and numeracy skills. Good work has been done recently on identifying key skills which are taught through different themes. The curriculum allows the effective promotion of pupils' personal development skills. It is carefully and sensitively modified for pupils who may be vulnerable or in need. A wide variety of intervention groups are organised for pupils who need additional support and 'booster groups' are organised to target individual pupils who may be falling behind. The curriculum is made interesting and relevant by additional opportunities through music tuition, the teaching of French and by the good use of a number of interesting visits and visitors. The excellent number and range of lunchtime and after school clubs is appreciated by pupils and parents. There are good links with the local area as pupils visit the church, Braintree museum and a local Sea Life Centre.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has a very caring culture and pupils confirm that they feel well looked after. Parents are confident in the school's safety and security procedures and agree that it is a caring

community. Pupils know they can go to an adult for help if they are worried. Procedures for child protection and for minimising possible risks are in place and meet requirements. There is good liaison with other agencies to provide specialist support for pupils when required. The school develops a helpful and supportive partnership with its parents. The school now collects and uses assessment data well to track the progress which pupils are making. The information collected about how pupils are doing is used well to monitor performance and to set pupils' useful learning targets which they say are helping them to improve. Teachers' confidence in making accurate teacher assessments of pupils' work, particularly in relation to National Curriculum levels in subjects other than English and mathematics is still being consolidated.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's ethos effectively brings together a concern for the welfare of individual pupils with a drive to maximise their achievement. The headteacher and other leaders work well together as a team and share a very clear vision for the future of the school. The headteacher is supported well by effective senior leaders, although the roles of the middle managers in leading subjects other than English and mathematics require further development. Planning for improvement through an effective school development plan is at the heart of school leaders' work. The school's involvement in the community is important in helping to integrate the different communities represented in the area. The management of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is effective in supporting individual pupils and helping them reach their targets. The school knows how well it is doing and how to get better because its self-evaluation procedures are clear and robust. Staff at all levels are increasingly accountable for improving standards. Governors support the school well and are developing their monitoring and evaluative role in order to challenge the school more effectively.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cressing Primary School, Braintree, CM77 8JE

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to the school recently to see how well you were doing. I enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work and at play.

Here are some of the best things about your school

- You are all looked after very well. The school makes sure that opportunities are open to all pupils.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors work well together as team to make sure that the school continues to get better.
- You work and play well together and there is a very impressive sense of belonging together in the school.
- You particularly enjoy the excellent number and range of clubs that are available at lunchtimes and after school.
- Good involvement of your parents and some of the other excellent links established with the local community help the school to play an important part in the life of the village.

There are a just a few things that I think could be even better

- You need to work hard with your teachers to make sure that you all do as well in science as you do in English and mathematics.
- You need a better understanding of different lifestyles, cultures and religions in the United Kingdom community.

Thank you again for your welcome. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Missin

Lead inspector