

North Crescent Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115242
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326161
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Judith Dawson

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)	200
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	Mrs Pam Petts
Headteacher	Mrs Jacquie Barber
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	North Crescent Wickford Essex SS12 9AP
Telephone number	01268 765905
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

North Crescent Primary School is of average size. Pupils come from a diverse mix of social backgrounds, including two Traveller sites. More pupils than average join or leave the school during their primary education. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or or disabilities is about average, but more pupils than average have statements of special educational needs for medical, specific learning, behavioural, social and emotional difficulties or because of delayed development. Attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage is below average. There are fewer pupils from minority ethnic groups than in most schools and very few are in the early stages of learning English. The school is supported by a part-time interim headteacher pending the arrival of a new headteacher next term. The school holds the National Healthy Schools Award, the Active Mark and the Inclusion Mark. It has gained the Foundation Level for the International Schools Award. The school opted to receive support through the Essex Local Authority's Improving Success Programme. From September, the school will become smaller as it adopts a single form entry.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

North Crescent Primary School provides pupils with a satisfactory education. Although leadership and management are satisfactory overall, there have been improvements in the effectiveness of the senior management team and of subject leaders since the last inspection. Phase and subject leaders now monitor the work of the school satisfactorily, giving them a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Plans for improvement are appropriately focused on raising achievement. This ensures the school has a sound capacity to continue to improve further during this period without a permanent headteacher. The part-time interim headteacher has rapidly developed an astute understanding of the school's needs, providing good support for the senior leadership team. This is an inclusive school, where adults foster effective links with parents and other agencies to support pupils' learning and personal needs.

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 remain below average but have improved on the outcomes of the 2008 national assessments. This represents satisfactory progress throughout the key stage. In the 2008 statutory tests at the end of Key Stage 2, standards were average. This year, standards are slightly below average. Although there are more pupils who have difficulties learning, the school's tracking data shows that almost all pupils have made at least satisfactory progress and several have made good progress since the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils know how to take care of themselves and work and play well together. They have a good understanding of other cultures and current national and world issues. Travellers are welcomed and respected. However, too many pupils, especially from the travelling community, miss school without permission and attendance is poor. This means that pupils' personal development and well-being are no better than satisfactory overall.

All aspects of the school's provision are satisfactory. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and plan English and mathematics lessons to reflect the different abilities within their classes. In many of the lessons observed during the inspection, pupils learnt effectively, supported by good questioning and clear explanations. Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to work ensure they make the most of their lessons. However, although teachers set targets for their pupils, few pupils are involved in assessing their own performance and taking responsibility for improving their work. Teachers' marking, while generally supportive, does not always give clear pointers for improvement.

The satisfactory curriculum is evolving well, generating links between subjects to extend skills and make learning relevant. Pupils are well cared for, and they feel safe and enjoy school. Academic guidance is satisfactory overall. Pupils with specific learning, medical or emotional difficulties receive good support. The school has sound procedures for promoting good attendance, but these have had limited impact. The school promotes community cohesion well, and is effective in extending pupils' understanding of the social, cultural and economic diversity within the school community and beyond.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 4

When children start school, their attainment is below what is expected for their age. They do not make as much progress as they should and very few are on course to meet the learning goals set for them nationally by the end of the Reception Year. There are several reasons why

progress is unsatisfactory. Activities do not provide enough stimulus and challenge. For example, during the inspection, children cut out entry tickets for the class museum. They could not read them and they had been made by an adult, missing the opportunity for children to design their own tickets. Most activities are adult-led and children have insufficient challenge and opportunities to plan their learning and develop independence. The outdoor area is not used as an integral part of the classroom and this means that children do not have enough opportunity to develop their curiosity and skills outdoors. The school has recognised this and is providing support to accelerate progress.

Teaching, learning, and the curriculum are unsatisfactory and staff rarely plan activities to meet the needs of children of different abilities. Assessments of what children know and need to learn next have not been accurate in the past. Children often spend too long listening to the teacher rather than actively learning. However, children establish good relationships with adults and each other. Their behaviour is good. Satisfactory provision for children's welfare ensures they feel safe and cared for and many parents say that their children are happy in school. Nevertheless, provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is inadequate. Until this term, there has been no leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is now an Early Years Foundation Stage leader, who recognises where improvements need to be made but has not had time to address the weaknesses.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensuring that it meets children's needs, is stimulating and involves them in initiating their own learning both inside and outside.
- Develop ways of reducing the incidences of unauthorised absences, particularly amongst the travelling community.
- Ensure all pupils have a good understanding of the quality of their work and what they should be achieving, and involve them in setting their own targets to accelerate progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1 but standards in reading, writing and mathematics were well below average in the 2008 statutory assessments for seven-year-olds. Pupils now in Year 2 are still working at lower levels than expected for their age group but at higher levels than in 2008, in spite of some changes of teachers when they were in Year 1. Reaching average standards in the national tests for eleven-year-olds in 2008 was a tribute to the work the school has done to raise achievement from the consistently below average attainment since 2005. Almost all pupils who have been in school since Key Stage 1 have made the expected progress during Key Stage 2 and a significant minority exceeded expectations, especially in mathematics as pupils responded to the school's focus on mathematics this year. However, 40 per cent of pupils now in Year 6 have learning difficulties or disabilities and others have joined the school recently with well below average prior attainment. This means that the attainment of the present Year 6 pupils is lower than that in 2008. Pupils with statements of special educational needs achieve as well as their peers because they are supported well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. They treat one another with respect and are polite to visitors. They become tolerant and caring individuals who take on a good range of responsibilities, such as acting as play leaders. The school council is effective, and members are proud of the funds they raised to improve resources. Pupils are building a sound foundation for the future, developing financial awareness and improving their literacy and information and communication technology skills. They make a positive contribution to the community, raising funds for a range of charities and singing in the local church at Christmas. Pupils behave well and enjoy school. As one pupil said, 'There is plenty of space and the teachers are really helpful'. Their understanding of Britain as a diverse society is good. They also have a good understanding of how to eat healthily and keep safe, including when using the internet.

Attendance is low. Although most pupils attend school regularly, several pupils, mainly from Traveller backgrounds, are frequently absent from school. These pupils cannot achieve as well as they should, many missing more than 10 per cent of their schooling.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although many lessons are good, teaching is inadequate in the Early Years Foundation Stage and teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Most lessons progress at a brisk pace and teachers ensure pupils have opportunities to learn independently and find things out for themselves. Pupils know what they are expected to achieve in the lesson. Teaching assistants support pupils well and those supporting pupils with individual education plans help pupils work towards their targets. Most teachers provide good extension activities for the most able pupils. Teachers use assessment data to set pupils targets for English and mathematics but many pupils are not clear what these are, categorising themselves as 'must', 'should' or 'could' without being clear what it is they need to achieve. Additionally, pupils are not sufficiently involved in evaluating their own performance in order to set personal targets for improvement. Marking is helpful in some classes, giving pupils advice on how to improve their work. This is not fully established throughout the school and there are few examples in pupils' books of any response to the teachers' comments. Pupils in Key Stage 1 do not have easy access to much of their completed English and mathematics work so they cannot see how they have improved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides an appropriate curriculum to enable pupils to develop English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology skills. The teachers are increasingly using other subjects as a focus for developing English and mathematical skills, making learning interesting and relevant. This has been successful in helping pupils apply their skills independently. However, planning for subjects other than English and mathematics is not always sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of the different ability groups, especially for the younger pupils. Theme days generate a strong sense of community and good quality work. Links with other schools, visits and visitors extend pupils' learning and good use is made of local organisations, such as the town council, to develop their understanding of their place in

the community. There is a sound number and range of additional activities and opportunities for sport, although several pupils expressed a desire to have a football team. Parents, governors and other adults provide additional activities in school, including support for music and art.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

All staff work closely to ensure that pupils are well cared for. All the required procedures for safeguarding and child protection are in place. Staff know the pupils well and pastoral care is good. The monitoring of attendance is satisfactory but more needs to be done to reduce the incidences of unauthorised absence, especially amongst the Travelling community. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good and has a positive effect on their personal development and academic progress. The tracking system helps teachers to identify pupils who are not making enough progress and put in measures to help them. Although there is evidence of some accelerated progress, this system has not been in place for long enough to have a significant impact on standards. Pupils have targets to help them improve in literacy and numeracy but they are not as familiar with them as they should be and they are not sufficiently involved in setting their own targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Although there is no permanent headteacher or deputy headteacher at present, it is clear that the school is in safe hands. The interim headteacher is knowledgeable and has already been successful in ensuring that members of the senior leadership team have confidence in their abilities to continue the process of support and school improvement, with the help of the local authority. The key stage leaders have honed their skills in recent years and now monitor and support the work of their colleagues effectively. Subject leaders evaluate provision and standards and use the outcomes of tests to identify and address any gaps in provision. Leaders, governors and managers have a sound understanding of the school and plans for improvement are relevant, now including a programme of support for the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the new Early Years Foundation Stage leadership is not yet effective in generating improvements. Governors support the management team well. Although most do not actively monitor the work of the school, several visit school regularly to support learning. This helps them observe the outcomes of school development and track the progress of individual pupils through the school. Leaders acknowledge the need to reduce absence as a priority, and the school makes good use of the Traveller Support Services to ensure that all families are fully informed of school systems and events.

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?	3
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	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	4
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	4
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	4
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
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	4
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 learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
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**

30 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of North Crescent Primary School, Wickford, SS12 9AP

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help during our visit to your school. We were impressed by your good behaviour and the way you work together. A special thanks to the school council and the two girls who told us about the Victorian Museum you created. We would have enjoyed seeing that. You told us that you are well cared for in school. We agree with you. You and your parents told us that almost all of you enjoy school. We are pleased to hear it. But some of you are absent from school too often. This stops you learning as much as you should and prevents you enjoying all that the school has to offer. We have asked the school to help you and your parents understand how important it is that you attend school regularly.

We can see that you are working hard and making steady progress because teaching and learning are satisfactory. Some of you are making good progress and we have asked the teachers to make sure you all know exactly what you need to learn next. We would like you to decide for yourselves how successful you have been and set your own targets to make your work even better. Then you can amaze your teachers with your progress! You learn about lots of things and the teachers are making learning interesting by linking subjects together to help you practise your skills.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle into school well and are taken care of, but have not been helped to learn as well as they should. They do not have enough opportunities to learn for themselves through interesting challenges either inside or outside. We want your school to make sure that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get a sound start to their education so that they join Year 1 with the skills they need.

Although you have just lost your headteacher and the headteacher you have for this term is not in school every day, the other teachers in charge of the school are making sure you continue to have a sound education and are well cared for. They, and the governors, are working hard to make things even better for you all.

We wish you and your teachers all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Dawson

Lead inspector