

Crabtree Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117312
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326569
Inspection date	19 May 2009
Reporting inspector	David Jones HMI

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	178
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	Mr Robin Cregan
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Whitehurst
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Crabtree Lane Harpenden AL5 5PU
Telephone number	01582 623597
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector. HMI invited the school to nominate a senior manager to join the inspection team for all aspects of their work; the headteacher elected to take this opportunity herself. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards and achievement; the personal development of the pupils; and the quality of teaching and learning. Evidence was gathered from the school's data, pupils' work, lesson observations, meetings with school staff and pupils, senior staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report. This inspection was coordinated with the inspection of the junior school on the same site; pupil progress was a key focus in both establishments.

Description of the school

Crabtree Infants School is smaller than usual for an infants school. The pupils' social and economic backgrounds vary but are above average, overall. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is low.

The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national figure and the number whose first language is not English is half the national average. Pupils' attainment on entry into Year 1 is above average. The proportion of pupils registered by the school as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is just above average, as also is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. There are few looked-after children. The school has been awarded the national Healthy Schools Award and has received the following accreditations from the local authority: Gold School Travel Plan, Extended School's Award, and the Quality Standards for Early Years Childcare and Education.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school; the headteacher and her staff have remorselessly focused on pupils' progress and the enhancement of their personal development. Standards have risen year on year since the last inspection. The pupils flood into school in the morning pleased to start their day and are often reluctant to leave in the evening. The overwhelming majority of parents responded positively to the inspection questionnaire and a high proportion were keen to explain how the school had helped their child.

The pupils' personal development is outstanding; the manner in which they respond to the staff and show respect for one another is very positive. The children's attitude to learning is excellent; they articulate their own ideas with enthusiasm and listen to those of their peers with respect. Behaviour is excellent. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The ethos of the school guides all aspects of the pupils' behaviour, with social and moral development as key strengths.

The care, guidance and support the pupils receive are outstanding. The monitoring of pupils' progress, the use of target setting and the deployment of support and guidance are excellent; these have been at the heart of the progress the school has made. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current governmental requirements.

Overall, standards and achievement are outstanding with the proportion of pupils who attain a higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics reaching nearly twice the national average. Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage and outstanding progress across the school overall. Pupils across the full ability range, including those who need extra help and those who learn more quickly, make very good gains in their learning. They are very well prepared for the next stage in their learning.

The quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection was good with some outstanding practice; however, when consideration is given to the consistently high standards secured, then teaching must be judged outstanding.

The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is robust with a strong focus on pupils' progress. The head and her deputy were invited to accompany HMI in the joint observation of teaching and inspectors were able to concur with the evaluations offered by the school. The best lessons were well planned and engaged the pupils' attention at a number of different levels. Challenging questions were used well and thoughtful practical activities were well paced. Support staff provided good support and challenge for small groups of pupils; when inspectors arrived in the classroom it was often difficult to determine who was leading the lesson because of the strength of the team work in evidence. Assessment activities are used very well in the core subjects and these should be used more consistently to develop the pupils learning skills in other subjects.

Overall, the curriculum is outstanding because of the wealth of opportunities provided by visitors, school trips to the local area and the range of resources deployed to support learning. Healthy School status has been secured and the standard of food was clearly appreciated by the significant number of pupils who took school lunch.

Leadership and management are outstanding; they are good in all major respects and are exemplary in the manner in which provision has been improved and standards raised. Core subject coordinators provide clear direction and the manner in which they contribute to the

development of learning is strong. Senior staff and core-subject coordinators have raised standards by promoting high quality care and education; self-evaluation is accurate.

Community cohesion is good within the school and with the parents, as well as in the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world. However, development of both the local and international aspects of the pupils' education could be enhanced if greater continuity of educational provision was secured between the two schools that share the site. The school's financial resources are effectively deployed; value for money is outstanding. Governance is good with the monitoring of outcomes a strength. Capacity to improve is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

All aspects of Early Years Foundation Stage provision are good. Children enter Reception with communication and social skills which cover the full range, but which are, overall, above the expectations for their age. They make good progress and many are already working at National Curriculum levels before they move into Year 1. Personal development, care and provision are good. The happy children who enter school in the morning, organising themselves and their friends, are keen to begin the day. They settle quickly to the interesting range of tasks provided, which is testament to the quality of education they receive. Welfare provision is good; children learn how to keep safe and be healthy. They are encouraged to be independent through classroom-based and outdoor activities and they flourish in this well-managed Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

This successful school has set itself the following agenda:

- develop a cross-curricular skills-based approach in the foundation subjects to maintain the school's strong focus on standards and achievement
- extend further 'Assessment for Learning' through greater pupil involvement
- forge closer links with the neighbouring junior school to maximise synergies and further extend opportunities for learning within the local community.

Inspectors were happy to concur with these priorities for improvement.

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

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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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	1
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?	2
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	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**

20 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Crabtree Infant School, Harpenden, AL5 5PU.

Some of you may remember that inspectors visited your school just before the half term holiday. It was lovely to meet so many of you and we were really impressed by the way you tried so hard in lessons. Well done.

Watching you stream into school in the morning, keen to start the school day, was a real pleasure. The inspectors were very impressed with the quality of your work, the way you talk to your learning partners and your pride in showing what you have learned.

I have written a report to the headteacher and governors judging the school to be outstanding because of the excellent education it provides and the high standards of your work.

The headteacher and governors plan to improve the school further by:

- planning your work in subjects like geography and science in the same way as they do for literacy, to help you learn new skills and do as well as you can;
- working more closely with the junior school next door, to provide even greater learning opportunities.
- involving you more in assessing your own work.

Please thank your parents for taking the time to write to me. It was lovely to meet so many of you.

Yours faithfully

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector