

Croft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122463
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	327735
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon

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)	351
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 Steve Carroll
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Ball
Date of previous school inspection	4 April 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Station Road Sutton-in-Ashfield Nottinghamshire NG17 5FJ
Telephone number	01623 455255
Fax number	01623 455256

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors

Description of the school

The school is much larger than most primary schools. It serves a community of social and economic deprivation. An above average number of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities related mainly to communication, literacy and behaviour. A few pupils have a disorder within the autism spectrum. The great majority of pupils are White British and among the very few from minority ethnic backgrounds, some speak English as an additional language. There are 30 children in their Reception year entitled to Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

The school operates a breakfast club for pupils. It has links with local schools and provides placements for trainee teachers. It joined the local authority's 'Improving Schools' Programme' in September 2008, which is supporting the school's drive to raise standards. An after school club is held on site, which is not managed by the governing body. This club is inspected and reported on separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Croft Primary School is satisfactory. The school's leaders work hard and with determination and as a consequence, standards are beginning to improve. The school has several good features, although it has not yet reached the point where its overall effectiveness is good. The variable national tests over the past few years indicate underperformance in writing, as well as the achievement of girls and higher attaining pupils. Results in 2008, at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, while presenting a mixed picture are, overall, an improvement. Alongside the average standards seen in pupils' current work, there is clear confirmation that the school's efforts are bearing fruit. Achievement is satisfactory as is pupils' rate of progress over time. This view is supported by the school's detailed and accurate analysis of progress, which shows the great majority of pupils are on track to meet their targets and reach the level expected for their age in English, mathematics and science. Overall, pupils are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage of education and beyond.

At present, teaching and learning are satisfactory as lessons ensure pupils make at least sound progress. There are good elements in teaching developing from the headteacher's successful focus on improving the pace and challenge of learning, some of which comes from fairly new, but well implemented, initiatives. Teachers pay close attention to data on pupils' progress, which sharpens their planning of lessons. Individual and particular groups of pupils are identified for extra support when needed. The risk of underperformance is detected early on and dealt with effectively. There is a wide range of additional, well-informed support available in the classroom and beyond, so that pupils with learning difficulties and others have good opportunities to make progress. Pupils are well cared for and they are supported effectively, in terms of their personal needs and their academic progress.

The carefully managed development of the curriculum gives due regard to helping pupils' learning, particularly in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology and personal, social and health education. This focus also applies to provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage for Reception year children. However, teaching arrangements limit the opportunities for learning through play indoors and outdoors. Across the school, lesson topics are interesting, engage pupils and make their learning enjoyable. However, the time allocated to physical education falls short of the recommended two hours per week. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They have good attitudes to school, accept its positive ethos and values, which lead to good behaviour, staying safe and a healthy lifestyle. Pupils actively contribute to the school's success, its involvement in the community and to helping those less fortunate across the world.

Leadership and management are good because the barriers to achieving higher standards are clearly understood. This has led to recent good improvements in teaching and the curriculum. The school has a good capacity for sustaining its improvement. Effective strategies are bringing about necessary improvements and impacting positively on pupils' progress and standards. The local authority's 'Improving Schools' Programme' is succeeding by strengthening the actions the school is implementing to achieve its aims, such as: the high profile for class and individual targets, the use of pupil progress data in planning lessons and effective teaching methods that improve pupils' engagement. These are positively influencing learning and are consolidating the standards in pupils' work across the school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

When children enter the Reception classes, their attainment is generally below that expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress so that by the time they enter Year 1, most are in sight of the early learning goals and a minority reach or exceed them. Personal development is good. Children are happy, well settled in school and their behaviour is good. One parent commented, 'My son has become a confident little boy who cannot wait to get to school.' Welfare is supported effectively and the children are closely supervised and kept safe. All of the areas of learning prescribed in the Early Years Foundation Stage are planned for and assessed. However, there are too few opportunities for children to learn by making choices, initiating activities or their own play. The situation is exacerbated by the outdoor learning area being out of sight of the Reception classrooms. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Children are assessed regularly against the early learning goals and this information, alongside day-to-day assessment of the areas of learning, is used satisfactorily to monitor children's progress. Partnerships with the pre-school groups and early meetings with parents ensure that the children soon settle into the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to learn in all areas of the curriculum through play indoors and outdoors.
- Provide the recommended amount of time for physical education in Key Stages 1 and 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The current standard of pupils' work in Key Stages 1 and 2 is broadly average and provides a more consistent picture in English, mathematics and science than has been the case in recent years. The successfully implemented initiatives are turning around past underperformance and beginning to raise standards. Spelling and punctuation are more accurate and the quality of writing has improved. Girls' confidence is building and they actively engage in learning. Higher attaining pupils are stretched by appropriately challenging work. The school's data shows that the large majority of pupils are on track to achieve the levels expected by the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science, which is confirmed by their work in lessons. Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils are positively engaged in learning and are well placed to meet their teachers' high expectations. The few pupils falling short of expectations are the subject of close supervision and are being stretched effectively. Pupils with learning difficulties have intensive support, which is lifting their literacy and numeracy skills, so that they make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are developing as responsible and confident learners, with high self esteem. They enjoy very positive relationships with staff and with each other. Behaviour is good at playtimes as well as in lessons. Older pupils act as good role models, with some serving as trained buddies to ensure happy playtimes for all. Enjoyment of school activities, including lessons, is good; many children think their school is 'brilliant'. Older pupils talk of enjoying the level of challenge in their work. Attendance is in line with that of most schools. Pupils understand that their

decisions help to make school a safe and secure place. They are safety conscious and aware of dangers. They have a clear understanding of how to make healthy lifestyle choices, although opportunities for physical activity within the curriculum are insufficient. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils respect others. Through the activities of an enthusiastic school council, pupils make a good contribution to school improvements. For example, they have recently introduced ideas to help resolve minor playground disagreements and there have been several projects where they have contributed to the community. Pupils' ability to work well with others ensures a sound preparation for further study and future success.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

New developments in teaching are succeeding in strengthening learning. Each classroom and corridor is brightened with colourful, stimulating displays. Lessons are planned effectively and this is contributing to learning and progress being more consistent and at least satisfactory. Staff absence has contributed to a dip in the rate of pupils' progress in one year group and has caused concern for parents. However, assessments show that pupils are making up lost ground. Assessment information is used to plan lessons. This remedies the shortcomings observed in the previous inspection of matching work accurately to pupils' capabilities. The pace of learning is improving and is often lively, although occasionally over-directed. Sharply focused questioning adds pace, and opportunities for pupils to work independently and in groups enliven learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Much time is devoted to literacy and numeracy to ensure that pupils make satisfactory progress with basic skills. Activities are planned to apply literacy and numeracy in a wide variety of contexts. A discussion with one governor led to Year 6 pupils writing his biography. Pupils produce a school newspaper, which a local shop has undertaken to sell. This raises the profile of writing, promotes progress and encourages use of the school's good computer resources. Much curriculum development and training has boosted provision in English and mathematics, with effective concentration on letter sounds (phonics), speaking and listening, writing and computer-based mathematics programs. The curriculum increases pupils' enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning and achieving. The programme promoting social and emotional aspects of learning is contributing to pupils' healthy lifestyles and self-confidence, especially that of girls. A female football coach and a girls' computer club help in this respect. The curriculum is enriched with clubs and activities before and after school, which are popular with many pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures for safeguarding, risk assessments and child protection meet requirements. The staff know the pupils well and pupils feel confident to talk to them about any concerns they might have. The staff have effective strategies to manage pupils' behaviour, which have a positive impact on learning. Two trained play leaders encourage the development of a range of games and activities during playtimes to develop pupils' social skills well. Personal, social and health education supports pupils' personal development. Pupils with learning difficulties receive good support. Their needs, and those of the few pupils who use English as an additional

language, are identified early and effective action is taken to help them so that they make satisfactory progress. There are good links with outside agencies to provide additional support where necessary. The school has improved its systems to assess and track pupils' academic progress. Assessment is used effectively to monitor the progress of each pupil and to set targets. All pupils know their targets and find them valuable in helping them to know how to make progress. Marking and teacher's advice gives pupils a good understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The positive impact of the headteacher's leadership was evident at the time of the previous inspection. This strength has developed into effective leadership and, as a consequence of accurate school self-evaluation, the correct development priorities are being successfully pursued. The same can be said of leadership throughout the school, which has strengthened. The headteacher and her deputy have raised expectations and aspirations of both staff and pupils, which are communicated effectively throughout the school. Monitoring the work of the school, especially the rigorous analysis of pupils' progress, is the driving force behind subject coordinators and teachers taking account of, and being accountable for, the school's results. Their performance management targets are focused sharply on meeting this responsibility. The impact is the realisation of a strong sense of purpose and effective team-work. This is already having the desired effect on strengthening teaching and improving pupils' progress.

The governors give effective support, keeping the improvement in standards at the top of their agenda. They add also to the school's sound contribution to community cohesion, taking the lead in organising inter-school events. Pupils have helped with the local council's anti-litter campaign and, learning about different countries and cultures, widen their outlook. The school has a clear understanding of its community's context and has suitable plans to improve this aspect of its work. The headteacher and staff work hard, and with some success, in gaining parents' engagement with the school and their children's learning.

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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?	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?	3
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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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?	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?	3
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**

7 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Croft Primary School, Sutton-in-Ashfield, NG17 5FJ

My colleagues and I thoroughly enjoyed the two days we spent visiting your school recently. This was made all the more enjoyable by your very polite, friendly and helpful attitudes. You did yourselves and your school proud.

Inspectors visited to find out how well your school is doing. We agreed that the school is satisfactory although we saw lots of signs that your school is quickly improving. This means you are steadily making progress in all of your work. We were pleased to see that your lessons are lively and enjoyable. Your teachers are setting you work that is at the right level of difficulty for you. This is helped by all of the targets you have, and we were very happy to hear you think these really help you to improve your work.

We were impressed by how helpful you are towards each other, your school, as well as the community, for example in supporting the anti-litter project.

Your headteacher and all of the staff are working hard to make your school even better. The work and activities you do in lessons and before and after school are interesting and enjoyable. Some of you told us that you think there ought to be more physical education on the timetable, and we agree. I have asked the headteacher to increase the amount of time for physical education. The youngest pupils, those in Classes 11 and 12, ought to be able to play more and begin to learn in that way before Year 1. So I have asked the headteacher to give these pupils more opportunities to play as they choose, indoors and outdoors.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Alan Lemon

Lead inspector