

Crescent Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124013
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	328029
Inspection date	2 December 2008
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	380
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	John Harp
Headteacher	David Alston
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Pinewood Crescent Meir Stoke-on-Trent ST3 6HZ
Telephone number	01782 318145
Fax number	01782 599628

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

the progress that pupils make and the quality of teaching, particularly in Years 1 and 2 standards in mathematics in Years 3 to 6

pupils' awareness of how they can improve the standard of their work.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with leaders, a governor, pupils and staff, visits to all classes, scrutiny of pupils' work, observation of other aspects of the school day such as assembly, break and lunchtime, and analysis of parents' questionnaires and school documentation, in particular data on pupils' progress. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the 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.

Description of the school

Crescent Primary School is larger than average and serves a neighbourhood where there are areas of significant deprivation. This is reflected in the much higher than usual proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. A higher than average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nearly all the pupils are from White British backgrounds. More pupils than usual join the school after the normal time of joining. The school has Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision in a Nursery and two Reception classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Crescent Primary School is an outstanding school. The key to its success is the innovative leadership of the headteacher and the way that this has been shared with all staff. The end result is a school where enthusiasm and a common sense of purpose are tangible, ensuring the best for each individual pupil is at the school's heart. Parents are extremely positive about the school and say such things as: 'The headteacher promotes, models and expects from staff, pupils and parents, high standards in behaviour, work, manners and support.'

Many pupils who join the school, particularly those who join in Years 1 to 6, find social interaction difficult. However, the major success of the school is that, by the time they leave from Year 6, pupils have developed into extremely mature, sensible and responsible young citizens, who behave extremely well. They willingly take on a wide range of responsibilities and make an excellent contribution to the school and local community. For instance, as well as the active school council, pupils take up roles as journalists or photographers within the school and locality. An innovative practice is that pupils can apply to the school council, and be interviewed by members, for the role of school ambassador. These pupils are expected to set an example for younger pupils as well as help them settle disputes. They also run 'le magasin'. This is hugely popular and pupils thoroughly enjoy earning cents for good work or other contributions and spending them on a reward at 'le magasin'.

Pupils develop very good work habits and are encouraged to be independent and to work in pairs or small groups. These practices are ensuring that pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their education and their future. They have an extremely good awareness of how to stay healthy. They put this into practice exceptionally well, taking part in a wide range of sports clubs and activities. Pupils' knowledge of potential dangers, both in school and in the wider world, is exceptionally strong. Their awareness of the range of cultures in the United Kingdom and further afield is extremely well developed. They have a keen sense of their place in society and value diversity highly.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their school life because, as one typically put it, 'All the staff are wonderful, they really help you.' Much of the reason for pupils' enjoyment of school is the engaging and well-planned curriculum. It has been designed extremely well to suit the needs of the pupils and the locality. Links between subjects, for example to enable pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects, are well established. Art is a particular strength and, together with the excellent output of the school photographers, vibrant displays of two- and three-dimensional art enrich the environment. Pupils spoke enthusiastically of the wide range of visits that enrich the curriculum and they are really looking forward to the trip to France next spring.

The care and support shown to each pupil is exemplary. All pupils feel very secure and are happy that they can share problems without fear of their confidence being broken. There are excellent links with parents and carers, and the needs of the child, as well as the whole family, are high on the school's agenda. An indicator of the excellent pastoral care is that pupils who join the school after the normal time of starting settle very quickly. Staff make excellent use of expert assistance when required to ensure that the needs of vulnerable pupils are met. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported extremely well. Their needs are identified early and very clear plans are made for their progress.

Academic support and guidance are excellent. The crucial element of pupils knowing exactly what they need to do to improve their work is strong. Pupils know their targets and appreciate teachers' comments on these targets when marking their work. They also find the interviews that they have with their teacher to discuss their progress very helpful. The school has extremely clear systems in place to check on pupils' progress and keeps careful note of the progress of different groups to ensure that none is disadvantaged.

Children start in the Nursery with very limited skills and knowledge. They make good progress in the EYFS and this good progress continues through the school. It accelerates as pupils get older until they leave Year 6 having almost reached average standards. Standards in the national tests for Year 6 in 2007 were the highest that the school has ever achieved and were above the national average. They have fallen somewhat in the provisional results for 2008, but these pupils had much lower starting points and a very large majority reached the challenging targets set for them. Standards fell more in mathematics than in English or science, but current data show that pupils' progress in mathematics is at least as good as in the other subjects. Pupils achieve well through the school.

Good progress is the result of good teaching, which was found in all year groups, with some examples of outstanding teaching, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Teachers have created a stimulating environment and there is a purposeful and calm working atmosphere. A particular strength is the relationships between adults and pupils. This leads to pupils wanting to do well and trying their best. Teaching assistants are a key part of the teaching team, effectively taking responsibility for the learning of groups or individuals. There are times when pupils are not sufficiently involved in active learning and more able pupils do not always receive challenging enough work.

The school has a very clear picture of its strengths and areas for development, gained through rigorous monitoring by a wide range of stakeholders, including all staff, governors, pupils and parents. This has enabled potential weaknesses to be addressed well and effective work carried out to improve provision. For instance, standards in writing, especially for boys, have been identified as an area for improvement and very effective strategies are raising boys' interest and standards in writing. Professional development of all staff has a high priority, and together with the extremely well-planned deployment of staff, illustrates the outstanding value for money that the school provides.

Governors offer high levels of support and challenge. Their monitoring is thorough, a good example being the regular governors' open days, which enable governors to gain the pupils' perspective of school life. The promotion of community cohesion is strong at all levels. The school is an extremely cohesive community, an integral part of the local community and pupils are developing a keen sense of global issues. With the progress that is being made, and the high quality of leadership and management, the school is extremely well placed to continue to develop. A parent, summing up the views of many, said, 'I am proud to say that my child attends Crescent Primary.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start in the EYFS and settle quickly because of the caring and calm environment. They feel secure in the carefully planned routines, knowing for instance, that they wash their hands before lunch. They enjoy school from an early stage, as a well-planned range of learning activities engages their interests and allows them to build on their experiences

well. For instance, they were enjoying visiting the 'North pole' role play area and talking about how cold the ice cubes felt. This good planning for children's learning and development continues into the Reception classes, although some of the activities planned here are not so relevant to the children's experiences.

Children achieve well in both the Nursery and Reception classes as teaching is good. They have a low starting point when they enter the Nursery and are still working at well below average levels when they start in Year 1. Their progress is better in their personal and social development and in their use of numbers than in their communication, language and literacy. Leaders have acknowledged this and have put in place initiatives to address it, helping children link sounds and letters, for example.

The new leader of the EYFS has instituted thorough systems of assessment. However, although these identify children's next steps in learning, there is no arrangement to enable these to be immediately available to all staff. There is a strong team in the EYFS and the teamwork is ensuring good provision for these children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the very good practice seen in some areas of the EYFS is shared throughout the provision, so that all children have opportunities to engage in exciting and relevant learning activities.
- Ensure that more able pupils are challenged consistently so that more pupils gain the higher levels in the national assessments.

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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

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?	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	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?	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?	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 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Crescent Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 6HZ

Thank you so much for welcoming Mrs Walker and me to your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our day with you and were enormously impressed with how well you are developing into extremely sensible and mature young people. We particularly enjoyed talking to your school ambassadors, who are doing a great job. You told us that your school is 'the best' and we agree, it is outstanding.

You are making good progress because you are being taught well. In fact, some of the teaching, particularly in Years 5 and 6, is outstanding. You make a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes because the staff in those classes work well together to make sure that you learn well. We think that the range of things planned for you in lessons is outstanding. You told us you had 'loads of opportunities' and we agree. In particular, you enjoy the visits and are looking forward to going to France next year.

All adults take extremely good care of you and your headteacher and all staff and governors are very keen to make sure that the school does its best for all of you. We were glad to see that you know your targets to help you improve your work and to know that you find your teachers' marking helpful and really appreciate the opportunity to discuss your progress with them.

There are just two things that we have asked your school to improve:

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- make sure that all the learning activities for the children in the Nursery and Reception classes are really interesting and exciting
- give some of you who find your work easy more difficult work to do.

We are sure you will help the staff to make your school even better by continuing to work hard.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

John D Eadie

Lead inspector