

Cramlington Cragside Church of England Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134473
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	328906
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Moira Fitzpatrick

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	360
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 Boddy
Headteacher	Ms Joy Fleet-Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Cateran Way Cramlington Northumberland NE23 6EX
Telephone number	01670 714200
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school has been subject to reorganisation since the last inspection and has been transformed from a first school to a primary school. It has doubled in size and is much larger than average. Pupils of all ages, from Reception to Year 6 have joined the school since the last inspection due to local reorganisation. The current Year 6 is the first group of pupils to reach this age group since the school was reorganised. Nearly all pupils are from White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has increased since the last inspection and is now above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is very high and includes pupils who have either learning, social and emotional or medical needs. Changes in the nature of the school's intake have resulted in lower levels of skills and development on entry to the Reception class. The school holds a number of awards including the Healthy School Award, the Activemark and Investors in People.

Currently, school accommodation is very cramped owing to the rapid expansion in pupil numbers. The school will transfer to a new site in the spring of 2009. Since the last inspection there has been an unusually high rate of staff absence, including that of senior staff. The local authority has been providing intensive support for the school since January 2008 and is continuing to do so.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Standards are well below average and pupils' achievement is inadequate. The school's results in national assessments at the end of Year 2 have declined steadily in recent years. While unvalidated results for the 2008 national assessments showed a slight rise in performance in writing and mathematics, current standards in these subjects in Year 2 are well below expectations for the age of the pupils. Pupils do not make enough progress during Years 3 to 6, because there is not enough recognition of the impact of gaps in their learning and the assessment of their learning is too often inaccurate. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in the current Year 6 is well below what is expected for their age. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make significantly less progress than similar pupils in other schools and their standards are very low.

Pupils' progress has deteriorated because teaching and the curriculum are inadequate and do not meet the needs of all pupils. Inaccuracies in the assessment of pupils' work present a significant barrier to good learning. Too often, in both key stages, lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are set work that is too difficult for them to tackle independently; they then become passive and do not complete tasks. Since the beginning of 2008, the local authority has taken action to improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum by providing much needed training and support for staff. However, it is too soon to measure the impact of this support on pupils' achievement.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. There are some good features such as their behaviour and relationships, the contribution they make to the community and their attitudes to a healthy lifestyle. While attendance has improved this year it is still well below average at 92.6%. Pastoral care for pupils is good. Staff are alert to any changes in mood or behaviour and quickly offer help. Support and guidance for learning are improving but are not yet used consistently by all staff; new systems introduced by the local authority have not yet had time to have an impact on learning.

School leaders have not responded quickly enough to manage changes in the school and tackle areas for improvement. High staff turnover and staff absence have contributed to the slow progress made. There has been too little direction from school leaders to ensure that the school gathers a sharp picture of its strengths and where improvement is needed. All staff responded positively to support from the local authority to help the school identify areas for improvement at the beginning of the year. However, school self-evaluation is not accurate and senior leaders perceive the school to be more effective than it is. For example, they do not have an accurate enough picture of pupils' underachievement because of inaccurate and over-generous assessment. Recently appointed middle leaders are not used effectively to identify where staff and pupils need support and guidance to improve. The school has not made enough improvement since the last inspection, even when taking into account the significant changes in its nature and the staffing difficulties it has had to manage. Value for money is inadequate.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision and achievement are satisfactory. Children begin the Reception year with skills that are below those typical for their age. By the time they join Year 1 they have made satisfactory progress but their skills are still below those expected for their age; in reading and writing they are well below those seen nationally. Staff ensure that children feel safe and secure through following well established routines. Children quickly develop the confidence to make choices about their learning and work independently, because staff place strong emphasis on developing their personal and social skills. There is a good balance of teacher-led and child-led activity. Teaching is satisfactory and some good features are developing as recently appointed staff gain experience of the age group and the curriculum needs of the children. Staff make regular assessments of children's progress and these are becoming more accurate as a result of local authority guidance. Children are well cared for and very good care is given to children with specific needs. Outdoor provision is inadequate for the number of children in the Reception classes. Access is restricted and, because the space is too small, there is not enough scope for a wide range of learning activities outdoors. Resources for learning are limited and have not kept pace with the rapid rise in numbers in the Early Years Foundation Stage unit. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics and ensure that the curriculum is planned to cater for the needs of all pupils in these subjects.
- Ensure that senior leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the school efficiently and give more direction to the work of middle managers.
- Improve the accuracy of assessment of learning and ensure that this information is used effectively to set appropriately challenging targets for pupils.
- Provide enough space for children now in Reception to learn effectively outdoors in all areas of the curriculum.
- Improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards are well below average and pupils' achievement is inadequate. Results in national assessments at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have declined in the last three years from well above average to below. The work of pupils now in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 reflects standards that are well below average and confirm that pupils' progress is inadequate. By Year 6, pupils' attainment is still well below what is expected for their age and there are significant gaps in pupils' learning. Inspection evidence shows that the school is not on course to meet the challenging targets that have been set for the end of the year.

Although many average and above average ability pupils are making satisfactory progress this term, these pupils are not reaching the standards of which they are capable. This is because the school has not accurately assessed gaps in their learning caused by interrupted teaching in recent years. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the least progress because their needs are not accurately assessed in many classes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils are friendly, open and courteous and make their own important contribution to the good relationships which exist in school. During the inspection, the behaviour of pupils was good and in discussion they showed a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle and how to achieve it. Attendance rates, though slightly improved this year, are well below the national average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and, through fundraising and in other ways, they make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The school council is a lively and valuable body in which pupils learn to undertake responsibilities within the school and make valuable suggestions for improvements. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and feel safe, and they behave responsibly towards one another. Although there are some interesting links with local business, pupils' longer-term preparation for life after school is hampered by the low standard of the basic skills of a significant minority.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate. Despite examples of good and satisfactory teaching seen during the inspection, significant numbers of pupils across the school do not make enough progress to achieve as well as they should. Pupils' learning is not secure because the assessment of their learning is not accurate enough. Senior managers give staff unrealistic targets for improvement for many pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This often leads to the work being pitched too high for these pupils, who fail to make progress as a result. Staff develop good relationships with pupils and, as a number of pupils said, they want to work hard to please their teachers. Staff give much praise and make constructive comments to pupils on where to improve. Where teaching makes good use of knowledge of pupils' needs, activities are planned that allow pupils to work independently and at their own best pace. In such lessons, learning is secure, progress is good and pupils are delighted with their success. Teaching assistants play an important part in supporting pupils' learning and work well alongside teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The provision for English and mathematics is inadequate because the curriculum is not sufficiently adapted for lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who together form a high proportion of the school. This results in a significant proportion of pupils not making enough progress in developing their basic skills. Consequently they lack the confidence and skills to learn independently. Provision for information and communication technology is satisfactory and caters appropriately for pupils of all abilities. Other aspects of the curriculum are satisfactory and provide a sound base for extending pupils' learning through out of school clubs, visits and visitors. The school provides a range of extra-curricular activities in sport, music and art which give pupils the opportunity to develop special interests and talents. Provision for personal social and health education ensures that pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe. Links with local business help pupils learn about the world of work and develop their team skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils feel safe and secure in school and are confident that staff will resolve any problems they have. This is because staff form good relationships with them and with their parents and get to know them well. Parents praise staff for the way they care for their children. All safeguarding, child protection and health and safety requirements are in place.

The school makes good links with the parents of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; several expressed their appreciation of the support they are given to help their children succeed. Pupils with specific medical needs receive very good care from their support assistants. Assessment systems are developing well with the support of the local authority, though they are not yet embedded enough to have a significant impact on pupils' progress. While marking gives guidance on what to improve, too often the tasks that are set for many pupils do not provide the necessary small steps they need for secure progression.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are inadequate and the school lacks the capacity to improve. Senior leaders do not tackle known weaknesses with sufficient urgency and actions taken to bring about improvement from within the school are not rigorous enough. There is not enough delegation of responsibility and accountability to middle leaders to allow them to effectively monitor and evaluate the work of the school. They are not provided with a clear schedule for their work, nor are they given enough time away from their teaching duties to allow them to identify and remedy weaknesses in a short timescale. The leadership and staff of the school have responded positively to external support and advice to secure improvement in the quality of teaching and the curriculum. However, it is too early to measure the impact of this support on pupils' achievement. The governing body has challenged the school over standards and provision and has fully supported the intervention of the local authority this year, but governors do not have enough first-hand information about the school to have a sharp understanding of its weaknesses. School self-evaluation is inaccurate, because there is not enough regular and rigorous monitoring of its work. The school's use of challenging targets is not based on secure enough assessment of pupils' learning. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion through its links with parents, the church and in developing pupils' understanding of their role as caring citizens through charitable fundraising.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

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?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	4
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cramlington Cragside Church of England Controlled Primary School,
Northumberland, NE23 6EX

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. It was a pleasure to see how well behaved and considerate you are. This makes your classrooms happy and calm places for learning. It was good to see how well your other personal qualities are developing too, such as your willingness to take on responsibility and help to improve the school through the school council. We noticed the lovely shoe boxes of toys you had prepared for children in other countries so we know that you think about and care for those less fortunate than you are. Some of you have been trying hard to improve your attendance this term and it is getting better, though there is still room for more improvement. Well done and keep it up. It does make a difference to your learning.

You told us the school takes good care of you and we agree. We still have some concerns about your learning because you don't all make as much progress as you could. To help you learn better and reach even higher standards we have recommended that your school is placed in 'special measures'. This means that it will receive extra support and that inspectors will return to check that it is improving quickly enough. The extra help should help the school gain a better understanding of what you need to learn, help you to work at a faster rate and be able to tell you what to do to improve your work. Your school will also get help to organise changes so that improvements can be made quickly.

You can do your bit to improve the school by attending regularly, continuing to behave well and working hard as you do now. We hope that very soon your school will be able to improve without outside help because that will mean you are learning as well as you can and your teachers know exactly what to do to make things even better.

We wish you all the best of luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead Inspector