

The Croft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115568
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	338606
Inspection dates	12–13 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Hugh Protherough

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	149
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Hall
Headteacher	Janet Hoyle
Date of previous school inspection	13 July 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and watched all six members of the staff team teach at least once. Inspectors met with parents and carers, governors and staff. In addition to informal conversations in lessons, they held meetings with the school council and groups of pupils. They observed many aspects of the school's work and looked at a sample of pupils' work and documents such as the school improvement plan, curriculum and lesson planning, and the tracking of pupils' progress, as well as 99 questionnaires returned from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the profile of pupils' current achievements, especially in writing
- the extent to which the school's curriculum is tailored to meet individual needs and interests, and that pupils have sufficient opportunities to apply core skills in other subjects
- the impact of the work of middle leaders on improving provision and raising attainment.

Information about the school

This small school serves a number of local villages. The great majority of pupils are of White British or Other White origin. Other groups include pupils from mixed White and Black Caribbean and White and Asian backgrounds. Few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The overall proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils believed to be entitled to free school meals. Provision for children in Early Years Foundation Stage is currently made in a mixed-age Reception and Year 1 class. From September 2010 reception-aged children will work in a class of their own.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The Croft is a popular school which provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. There is an outstanding commitment to community shared by pupils, staff, governors, and parents and carers. As a result, many of the good features outlined in the last report, such as behaviour and knowledge of how to stay safe and keep healthy, have been sustained. Arrangements for safeguarding are thorough and staff provide good care for their pupils.

Over the past year, changes to the deployment of the staff team have been well managed and several teachers have embraced the opportunity to work with age groups that are new to them. Shared vision and strong teamwork have led to the development of much effective teaching, but expectations and approaches are not yet consistent across the school. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, but not enough is good. The great majority of pupils are articulate, motivated and capable of independent working. Teachers do not always make the most of this and learning sometimes loses impetus, especially when they talk for too long. Nonetheless, pupils' overall progress is satisfactory and they reach above average standards by Year 6.

The Reception class offers a satisfactory range of activities across the areas of learning. However, adults are not always swift enough to identify ways to support children's play and accelerate learning, especially in the outdoor classroom. While all teachers plan assiduously, the match of task to abilities and the quality of questioning and feedback to pupils vary from class to class. Pupils are avid readers but their writing is comparatively weak. This is because opportunities for pupils to write longer pieces of work and to edit and revise their work are not yet firmly established in all classes, and teachers do not insist that work is always presented neatly.

Pupils' achievements benefit considerably from a rich curriculum. Visits beyond the school offer good opportunities for pupils to apply their key skills in a variety of contexts. However, in some subjects such as science, the use of worksheets means that work is not always well matched to individual needs.

Leaders and managers have a secure view of the progress of each pupil at the school. They know where teaching needs improving and how to achieve this. Most crucially they have sustained an ethos where children thrive in personal terms and most parents and carers feel part of an educational partnership. Taken together, these features demonstrate satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise pupils' attainment in writing to match that in reading by:
 - increasing opportunities for extended writing and for pupils to revise and correct their work
 - establishing greater consistency in teachers' expectations for the neat presentation of work.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers do not talk for too long in lessons
 - work is always closely matched to pupils' abilities
 - pupils know the levels at which they are working and what they need to do to reach the next stage.
- Improve provision in the Reception class by ensuring greater opportunities for children to:
 - access resources independently to support their learning
 - work and play purposefully in the outdoor classroom
 - deepen their understanding through questioning and talk.
- These features should be apparent in 75% of lessons monitored by November 2010 and consistently in place by April 2011.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils speak enthusiastically about their experiences of school. They usually display positive attitudes in lessons and enjoy their learning, though this commitment can weaken if the teacher talks for too long or the work lacks challenge. As a result of such variations in provision, pupils' achievement is no better than satisfactory. The most recent national tests for Year 6 reflected the standards seen in lessons and pupils' books, and show these pupils making satisfactory progress from their Year 2 starting points. Attainment in English and mathematics is above average.

Pupils' wider achievements and personal development are effectively enhanced by imaginative projects in the arts. Many pupils are learning a musical instrument and the end of year production, involving every pupil in Key Stage 2, provides an excellent showcase for performance skills. Pupils are proud and knowledgeable about their village. The school has embraced the increasing diversity of its immediate community. Events such as China week and the teaching of French have successfully involved new parents and carers and broadened pupils' experiences and appreciation of other cultures.

Pupils say they feel safe, secure and valued. Behaviour is of a consistently good standard and pupils offer a friendly and courteous welcome to visitors. Observations of vulnerable pupils show that they are well cared for, helped to develop independence and to play a full part in the life of the school. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the

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importance of diet, run their own allotment and eat the produce. They enjoy regular opportunities to swim in the school pool during the summer and many take part in the good variety of clubs provided after school. Attendance is above average and punctuality is excellent.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The school's curriculum has a positive impact on learning. Teachers are adept at finding ways to engage pupils' interest by creating links between subjects. Art, music and the use of new technologies at the start of lessons frequently help to bring learning alive. Practical activities, such as using the school grounds for mapping, support the development of key geographical and mathematical skills.

Good attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support. The school provides a welcoming environment that celebrates pupils' work. The headteacher and staff work productively with parents and carers and other agencies, such as health and education welfare, to support the specific needs of individual pupils, particularly those who are most vulnerable and their families.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The core of teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory. Good relationships between staff and pupils support a positive ethos for learning. Most lessons progress at a steady pace, but occasionally the introductions go on for too long and pupils, though well behaved, find it hard to sustain their concentration. Lesson planning is detailed in English and mathematics, and usually identifies appropriate objectives that cater thoughtfully for the range of age and abilities in each class. In other subjects such as science, pupils' achievements are sometimes constrained by the use of identical worksheets that are either too hard or too easy for some of the class. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to learning, especially when working alongside groups and individuals, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The impact of their work at the start of lessons when teachers are introducing work is occasionally less effective.

Teachers make accurate assessments of pupils' work and in good lessons use this knowledge to accelerate progress. For instance, one teacher was swift to spot pupils' misunderstanding in a mathematics lesson and successfully modified subsequent work to correct this. As a result the pupils enjoyed a real sense of achievement. The quality of oral and written feedback to pupils is too variable. Perceptive questioning and the use of 'talk partners' deepen pupils' understanding in some classes, but are less evident in others. Expectations for a brisk pace to learning and the neat presentation of work lack the consistency and rigour necessary for some pupils to achieve the high quality of which they are capable. Pupils' work is marked, but teachers' comments do not always make clear the levels at which they are working and what they need to do to reach the next stage.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders consistently communicate high expectations and have secured the support of the staff team in rising to the challenge of working with different age groups. Staff at all levels are committed to the work of the school, ensuring improvement and positive outcomes for pupils. Governors visit regularly and offer good challenge and support in respect of monitoring the quality of education and the use of finance. As a result, there is shared commitment to realising the appropriate priorities of the school's improvement plan.

The school takes concerted action to promote equality of opportunity. Senior and

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subject leaders have a secure view of assessment data and the progress of groups and individuals across the school. The profile of attainment in recent years has been consistently well above the national average and often high, for all groups of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported effectively and make the same steady progress as their peers. Assessment information is used well to identify areas for improvement, such as recent successful action to improve spelling and the proposed support for mathematics in Year 4. However, day-to-day checks such as analysing work in pupils' books are not yet an established part of the leadership of teaching and learning.

The school adopts thorough approaches to all aspects of risk assessment and the safeguarding of pupils, in line with government requirements. Plans to promote community cohesion are appropriate and reflect an excellent understanding of the local context. Recent links with a school in a contrasting urban area and with a school in Ethiopia have successfully started to develop pupils' awareness beyond their immediate locality, but remain at an early stage of development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The new teaching team has made a satisfactory start to developing Early Years Foundation Stage provision in a mixed-age setting. Most crucially they have built close and trusting relationships with the children and their parents and carers. As a result children are happy to be at school and show confidence in daily routines. Friendships develop well and children work and play together constructively, including the older Year 1 pupils.

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Staff planning is strongest in relation to adult-led activities. Opportunities to encourage children to initiate learning for themselves are less well developed and staff do not clearly identify ways in which they might interact with children to deepen or extend their learning. This is particularly the case in the outdoor classroom, which is underused and where the quality of equipment and resources sometimes fails to stimulate and engage the children.

Close teamwork between the two teachers and their assistants has ensured a satisfactory start to the development of learning journals which are building a picture of children's achievements across the areas of learning. Current data show that this year, children have made satisfactory progress and are working at standards that are above average in all areas of learning. The few children who have not yet reached high standards have been accurately assessed and additional support has been provided for them.

The induction of next year's children was very well organised and highly successful. The 30 children, who will be taught in a dedicated Reception class, show high levels of social development, knowledge and skills. Most come from the neighbouring playgroup and already show great confidence in the adults with whom they will be working. An appropriate programme of training and staff development has ensured that leadership responsibilities in the Early Years Foundation Stage can be shared effectively next year.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers express high levels of satisfaction with the school. A few raise concerns about large mixed-age classes, but this is, to some degree, inevitable in a school of this size. Inspectors agree that pupils' progress and the meeting of individual needs, while good, could be further improved.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Croft Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 99 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 149 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	67	30	30	2	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	67	68	31	31	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	41	52	53	5	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	36	52	53	8	8	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	38	38	57	58	4	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	33	59	60	6	6	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	46	52	53	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	33	33	53	54	6	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	40	47	47	11	11	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	34	54	55	6	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	29	59	60	6	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	43	43	49	49	6	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	58	37	37	5	5	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Croft Primary School, Stroud, GL8 6RQ

I would like to thank you all for the warm and friendly welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. Your questionnaires and our conversations were extremely useful in finding out all about The Croft. We have judged your school to be satisfactory, which means that it does some things well but other things need to improve.

The staff work very hard to make sure you are safe and well cared for. You were polite and courteous throughout the inspection. You have lots of opportunities to keep fit and stay healthy and it is good to see so many of you joining in these activities after school. Most of you say you enjoy school and we could see that in most lessons and in much of your work. The way you sang and danced in 'Troy Story' was very good indeed. I hope your parents enjoyed the show as much as I did!

There are several things we want to happen that will make The Croft even better.

- You do not always do as well in writing as in reading, and in some classes you do not always take care to present your work carefully. We have asked the teachers to give you more writing to do in different subjects, and to not accept untidy work when they know you can do better. You can help by always trying your hardest to produce neat work!
- Reception children are working hard. We would like the grown-ups to plan more activities for the outside classroom and join in sometimes to help you learn more quickly.
- In Years 1 to 6 we would like to see more good teaching, so we have asked your teachers to make sure activities in lessons always make you really think without being too hard, and to explain to you the level at which you are working and then tell you what you must do to reach the next one.

By the time you read this the holidays will be over and you will all be in new classes, and some of you in new schools. Whatever your new surroundings I would like to wish you every success for the year ahead.

Yours sincerely

Hugh Protherough

Lead inspector

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