

Newcroft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119950
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	339564
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Hall

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	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	273
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michelle Garratt
Headteacher	Phil Goulding
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who visited all ten classes. They observed 18 lessons taught by ten teachers and two lessons taught by higher level teaching assistants. The inspectors also held meetings with the headteacher, staff, pupils and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the tracking of pupils' progress, school development plans and records of meetings of the governing body. Samples of pupils' recent work and documents regarding safeguarding were evaluated. Questionnaires from 87 parents or carers, 130 pupils and 18 staff were scrutinised.

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

- whether all groups of pupils, particularly the boys, the higher attainers and those with additional needs make enough progress, especially in writing
- how well pupils' personal development is promoted and whether behaviour is exemplary
- if learning is good and assessment information is used effectively to provide consistently challenging work for all groups of pupils
- whether leaders and managers ensure that school self-evaluation is up to date and they monitor and evaluate the work of the school rigorously enough to identify the right areas for further improvement.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average size school. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and none is at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than seen in most schools. These pupils have a range of learning, communication and behavioural difficulties. There is before- and after-school care available for pupils which is managed by the governing body and included within this report. The school was removed from Special Measures at the last inspection when provision was deemed good. The school holds Basic Skills and International Schools' awards as well as Activemark and Healthy Schools' status.

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

This is a school that provides a satisfactory quality of education. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and has some very effective features. Pupils' personal development is good as is their behaviour. They understand how to keep themselves and others safe and they contribute to the school and wider community well. The care, guidance and support of pupils are good. Most like coming to school and say they particularly enjoy sport and practical activities. Parents are generally happy with the quality of care and education provided for their children and one notes the school helps 'develop them into well-rounded individuals'.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with mixed early learning experiences and sometimes with limited skills in communications, language and literacy and in aspects of their personal development. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with skills that vary from year to year but which currently are a little above the expectations for their age. In Years 1 to 5 progress is broadly satisfactory but inconsistent. When they leave the school at the end of Year 5, pupils' standards are in line with national expectations for their ages. Most pupils achieve satisfactorily. Pupils do best in their reading and many read well. Those with additional needs make satisfactory progress. Some more-able pupils do not achieve all they can in writing and mathematics. This is, in part, because they are not always confident in discussing their ideas in order to aid their writing and to help them solve problems.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory if variable. There are strengths in relationships and staff use praise well to motivate pupils to try harder. School assessment routines are effective and staff have a good range of information about pupil progress. However, this information is not always used well enough to provide challenging activities that meet the needs of different groups of pupils. The curriculum is satisfactory and there are strengths in the range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. There have been many recent changes to planning to improve areas including writing. However, these and other initiatives are at an early stage and have not yet had time to become embedded and consistently effective.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides forceful leadership. He is supported by a staff team, many of whom are long serving and committed to the local community. Key subject leaders have a clear grasp of assessment data. But, while the headteacher checks the quality of provision, some subject leaders have recently had limited opportunity to directly monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning across the school. This has not enabled school self-evaluation to be as up to date or sharp as it might otherwise be. With inconsistencies in several key

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areas the capacity to improve further is currently no more than satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing and mathematics by;
 - ensuring pupils develop a wider vocabulary and the skills to produce higher level pieces of accurate and imaginative writing
 - extending pupils' confidence, speed and precision in solving mathematical problems.
- Improve the use of assessment information in order to plan activities that fully challenge groups of pupils of different abilities.
- Develop the capacity and skills of staff in monitoring and rigorously evaluating the quality of provision in areas for which they hold responsibility.
- About 40% of the schools whose 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

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 as confident and enthusiastic young learners. From then on, as they move through the school, progress is more variable. Pupils do well in their reading and are well supported in this at home. Therefore, many become enthusiastic readers who say they like using the library. In end of year assessments in 2009 the school recognised that some pupils were underachieving and that standards in writing and mathematics were not high enough. A lot of focus has been put on improving writing skills and the school is confident this is beginning to have an impact. However, observations of lessons and samples of the pupils' recent work indicate that not enough are achieving well. Some more-able pupils are not yet reaching the higher levels in writing and problem solving activities. Where progress is good, for instance in Year 5, pupils develop an in-depth knowledge of character by focusing on inference and deduction within a text and staff challenge them to 'tell me more'. Overall standards are broadly average and most pupils achieve satisfactorily which helps them prepare for their future economic well-being. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress towards their targets particularly when they receive additional support.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and recognise how their behaviour impacts on the safety of others. There are good opportunities for them to contribute to the school and local community including through the school band and raising money for charities. Pupils really enjoy sport and benefit from the many activities that enable them to lead an active life. However, while most recognise the benefits of a healthy and balanced lifestyle there is more to be done to convince a few to choose more wisely at snack time, eat fruit and vegetables at lunchtime and make healthier choices for packed lunches. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and there are lots of opportunities to develop social skills when working in groups and with a partner. Cultural

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development is satisfactory with strengths in provision for music but pupils' understanding and experience of life in multicultural Britain is limited. Attendance is good but affected by the taking of holidays in term time.

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	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

While the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall this ranges from occasionally outstanding to inadequate. All staff have good relationships with pupils. They manage their behaviour well even when pupils lose concentration in lengthy introductions to lessons and when background noise from open-plan areas makes listening difficult. Where teaching is most effective staff make good use of assessment information to identify what the pupils need to learn next and planning shows an appropriate level of challenge for groups of different abilities. However, the use of such information is inconsistent and impacts on pupils' learning and particularly that of potentially more-able pupils who are not challenged on a regular enough basis. Curriculum planning is satisfactory and there are strengths in extra-curricular activities and enrichment opportunities, which was well illustrated in the enjoyment of Year 2

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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pupils on 'Pirate Day'. The day-to-day curriculum in English and mathematics is satisfactory. However, at times planning does not focus well enough on the sometimes small next steps to learning, including neat handwriting and careful and accurate spelling. The marking of pupils' work has been a focus since the last inspection but this is still variable. During the current year staff have introduced several initiatives including 'stepping out' the stages in story writing. These and other initiatives are often at an early stage of development.

The pastoral care of pupils is good and staff know their pupils well. There are strong elements in the pastoral support provided for pupils with concerns that are troubling them and for their parents. Individual education plans for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities identify targets that are regularly evaluated. The quality of support provided by teaching assistants is satisfactory although at times they are underused. Senior staff recognise that there is scope to move to more personalised support in the classroom to reflect new curriculum approaches. The care of pupils in the breakfast club is good. Pupils benefit from staff provided through extended services in areas such as lacrosse which supports the development of healthy lifestyles well. The school has worked hard to improve attendance and the proportion of persistent absentees has been cut.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team challenge themselves and others robustly. Since the previous inspection the school has worked to develop a more corporate approach to leadership by devolving responsibilities amongst the staff team. This has been successful in terms of developing the profile of assessment within the school which has ensured there is a reliable means of identifying exactly what progress individuals and groups are making. School self-evaluation is broadly satisfactory but does not always take sufficient account of recent information. While there are some opportunities to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning through lesson observations and sampling pupils' work, the opportunities afforded to subject leaders including in mathematics have been limited. This has not helped develop their role in supporting improvements in the classroom. Governance is satisfactory. There are several governors new to their posts including the Chair of Governors who are keen to develop their role further in holding the school to account for the standards achieved.

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Links with parents are generally good. While some have concerns the large majority are pleased with the care provided for their children. The school takes seriously its responsibility to safeguard the pupils. There are good procedures to support this, including checks of those who help in school, and to support Child Protection. The school takes prompt action to rectify issues related to the maintenance of the building so that the school environment is safe. There are satisfactory links with a number of external agencies and other schools that support new initiatives and the continuing professional development of staff. The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily and often supports vulnerable children well, although not always prioritising the needs of the higher attainers as effectively. The school works with several local groups in the community and recognises in its planning that there is further work to be done in relation to United Kingdom and global elements of such work.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is a strength of the school that has been maintained since the previous inspection which noted that they 'got off to a flying start'. All children now enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in September and early assessment information indicates that their skills are sometimes below what is expected including in their levels of independence and communication skills. They settle happily and make good progress in all areas of their development so that by the end of Reception, they have in recent times slightly exceeded national expectations particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. Teaching and learning are good and there are outstanding features in the manner in which children's independence is

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developed so that they feel confident to make choices in what they do. The curriculum is engaging and lively and activities are well linked to themes such as the current focus on 'The Teddy Bears Picnic' while also providing the specific teaching of basic skills. There is a good balance of child-chosen and adult-directed activities. Staff recognise and manage well the challenges of developing continuous free-flow choices in such an extensive outdoor area. Provision for the group of children who are in a mixed age class with slightly older pupils is satisfactory and they benefit from often working with the whole reception age group. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and has been maintained over several years so that most pupils in the school have benefitted from a positive start to their education.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

While relatively few parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire most of those who did and those spoken to during the visit agree their children are happy at school and that they are kept safe and well cared for. Many recognise the strength of extra-curricular provision including the school band and cooking. Some also speak with pleasure about the residential experiences offered where 'the itinerary was most impressive and presented many learning opportunities'. Some also note the close-working relationship developed with class teachers. The most significant concern noted is that several parents do not feel the school takes account of their opinions and concerns. Some do not feel that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour and they would like more information about how to help their children. Inspectors accept that some parents do not feel their questions are welcome and that leaders can, at times, be robust in their discussions with others. However, inspectors note that behaviour is good and well managed. The school provides a good number of opportunities for parents and staff to discuss progress and there is a satisfactory range of information available.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Newcroft 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 87 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 273 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	51	39	45	2	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	49	56	36	41	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	25	52	60	9	10	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	32	49	56	6	7	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	28	32	49	56	4	5	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	34	44	51	11	13	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	40	44	51	6	7	1	1
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)	24	28	48	55	5	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	31	49	57	6	7	3	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	26	50	57	11	13	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	19	52	60	14	16	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	27	31	49	56	4	5	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	44	40	46	7	8	2	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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.



17 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Newcroft Primary School, Loughborough, LE12 9DU

Thank you very much for making the inspection team welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed chatting to you, including groups who were good at explaining what you all do. We also liked meeting you in lessons, at break and lunchtimes and when we attended assemblies. I particularly enjoyed seeing the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage getting ready for their Teddy Bears Picnic and the fun those of you in Year 2 had dressing up for Pirate Day. Thank you also for the questionnaires that you filled in for the inspection. These are some of the findings from the visit.

Your school is providing you with a satisfactory quality of education. The best progress is made by the youngest children. They really enjoy their time in school and learn lots of new things. Staff care for you well so that you are safe and happy. We were pleased to see that you behave well and enjoy reading.

To improve your school further, we have asked the headteacher and staff to:

- help raise standards in writing and mathematics so that all of you and particularly those who find learning easy make more progress
- ensure that all staff use the information they have from when they check your work to make sure that activities are not too easy for you
- give staff more opportunity to check what you are doing in lessons and in your work so that they can help other teachers improve what they are doing.

We were pleased to see that you are keen on sport and enjoy the additional activities available. But, can some of you also try and think a bit more carefully about what you eat so that you enjoy a healthier diet.

Yours sincerely

Sue Hall

Lead inspector

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