

Croft Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125605
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	340802
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	279
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Katie Broughton
Headteacher	Belinda Bollans
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 21 lessons and observed 10 teachers. They spoke with governors, staff, parents, carers and groups of pupils. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work, the analysis of the tracking of pupils' progress, school policies and procedures, school leaders' monitoring records, school development planning and risk assessments. They also analysed the questionnaires received from pupils, staff and 77 parents and carers.

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

- any variation in progress between different classes or different groups
- the impact of measures taken by school leaders to improve attendance, ensure consistent rates of progress, and to boost pupils' performance in writing.

Information about the school

The school is larger than average. Most pupils are White British, with around 10% coming from a range of different minority ethnic backgrounds. A below average proportion of pupils are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, mostly with moderate learning difficulties or speech and language delay. The school has recently gained Active Mark, an Eco Schools award 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

'Together we will succeed.' This, the school's motto, aptly sums up Croft Junior's abiding philosophy. In this good school, the headteacher and governing body have built a staff team with a shared commitment to improvement. They have worked together successfully to create a stimulating learning environment where pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and where they are helped to grow in confidence and achieve well. Attainment has improved since the last inspection. It is above average because boys and girls of all abilities make good progress. Staff keep a careful track of how well each pupil is doing, with prompt additional support put in place for any pupil who falls behind. This has particularly helped pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, but others have also benefited, and this is much appreciated by parents and carers. As one wrote of the arrangements to boost her son's achievement: 'The school gave him extra lessons in his weaker subjects. This has helped increase his understanding.' The last inspection report identified underachievement among more able pupils. Initiatives to raise these pupils' attainment, including a reorganisation of the way pupils are taught English in Year 6, have resulted in an increase in the number of pupils attaining higher levels in the national tests. Nevertheless, there are still some lessons where able pupils are not challenged as much as they could be.

As 'Green Gladiators', pupils work together not merely to promote environmental issues but also to ensure that they each maintain a healthy lifestyle. They 'police' each other's lunchboxes, for example, to promote a wholesome diet. Older pupils also act as play leaders organising playground games. Pupils feel very safe at school and are confident that staff will help them with any problems they might have. This faith is well founded, because the school has good systems for looking after pupils' welfare, working together successfully with parents and carers, for example, to support those children with chronic medical conditions. Pupils behave well, and their good relationships with each other and their teachers contribute strongly to the friendly, harmonious atmosphere that pervades the school. They are especially well motivated by the excellent curriculum, in which different subjects are successfully knitted together to extend their learning. Pupils in Year 5, for example, were excited and energised by the opportunity to build on the work they were doing in English using persuasive language to translate their scripts into 'radio' podcast commercials using information and communication technology (ICT). A feature of the curriculum that stands out in this school is the length staff go to provide memorable experiences that excite pupils' curiosity and fire their imagination, such as when staff simulated a meteor impact in the school grounds as a stimulus for Year 5 topic work on space.

School leaders have an entirely accurate picture of the school's many strengths and of

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what is needed to move it further forward. This is based on thorough analysis that draws together monitoring of lessons and of pupils' work and takes account of pupils' views of how well they think they are learning. This has led to the improvements seen in teaching since the last inspection, ironing out some of the previously uneven progress across different year groups and with a now much higher proportion of lessons where pupils make the rapid progress of which they are capable. Some inconsistencies still remain, however. Although most lessons proceed at a brisk pace, teachers' lesson introductions occasionally go on for too long at the expense of the time needed by pupils to complete independent activities, and so limiting opportunities for extended writing. Lessons routinely start with pupils being given 'learning intentions' but these are sometimes merely a statement of what they are due to do rather than what they are expected to learn. When they are working independently, pupils are not always reminded of the 'success criteria' which they are aiming to achieve. When this occurs, pupils do not all get as much as they could out of the lesson. There are examples of excellent marking that sets out for pupils the next steps they need to take to improve their work. This is especially the case in English. However, as leaders have themselves identified, this is not a consistent feature of marking across the school. Nonetheless, the success of the headteacher, leadership team, staff and governing body in working together to achieve an across-the-board rise in the quality of provision and in pupil outcomes amply demonstrates this school's good capacity for continued improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further accelerate pupils' progress in lessons by:
 - pacing lesson introductions so that they do not squeeze the time available for pupils to complete their independent activities and practise their writing skills
 - ensuring that the objectives set out at the start of lessons identify what it is that pupils are expected to learn rather than just the activities they are due to carry out
 - while they are working independently, reminding pupils of their learning objectives and the criteria against which they should measure their success.
- Make full use of the assessment information which teachers have available to them to:
 - consistently match work to pupils' different capabilities, particularly to stretch the more able
 - giving all pupils the same good guidance, through marking in other subjects, that they have in English.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Attainment is above average, and this represents good progress in relation to pupils' average starting points as reflected in their infant school assessments. Pupils' books show the good progress they have made over the past year. Previously, pupils did

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notably less well in some year groups than in others. Pupils' work over the year, lessons seen during the inspection and leaders' monitoring records all show that this apparent underachievement of the past has been eliminated. Standards in mathematics, in this school, have historically been higher than those in English. Initiatives to boost pupils' performance in English have had a significant impact. An emphasis on detailed marking in writing, setting out for pupils the next steps in their learning, and the increasingly stimulating opportunities to write for a wide range of different purposes in cross-curricular topics, have contributed to the acceleration of progress this year in English. Success in the key subjects of English, mathematics and science has not been at the expense of other subjects. On the contrary, work in subjects such as art is of a high standard, with pupils eagerly demonstrating what they have learnt about a wide range of, mainly late-19th and mid-20th century, Western artists.

Key to pupils' success is their enthusiasm, fed by the imaginative way in which each new topic is launched. Boys and girls of all abilities are eager to take part in lessons, and there is a high participation rate in the many extra-curricular clubs on offer. Pupils listen well to their teachers, although they do not always listen quite so well to each other's contributions in class. Attendance has improved as a result of the school's initiatives to promote good attendance and chase up absences. It is average, having been affected this year by snow closures, bouts of 'flu, and some families continuing to take holidays in term time. Nevertheless, pupils' key literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, and their positive attitudes and good collaborative working, together ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Initiatives such as the Credit Union, organised in school by a governor, also help to develop an insight into personal finance and budgeting, and provide a good grounding in skills that are likely to prove valuable in pupils' future lives. Croft Junior's Healthy Schools status, and its Active Mark and Eco awards, attest to the pupils' positive attitudes to health, exercise and the environment, as well as to the school's provision to promote these areas.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	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' 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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Pupils make good progress because they are well taught and because they benefit from a curriculum that makes learning exciting and fun. The links between subjects go beyond those routinely seen in other schools because work across different subjects is so seamlessly integrated. Pupils in Year 3, for example, built on what they had already learnt about castles as part of their history work to prepare glossaries explaining key vocabulary relating to medieval architecture as one of their activities in English. This helped their learning in both literacy and history, building solidly on what they had learnt across both subjects. Teachers are imaginative in thinking up new ways of introducing new topics and bringing them to life. A cross-curricular project on the Tudors, for example, was launched with much excitement with a visit from an ebullient 'Henry VIII'. Pupils get through a lot of work in lessons, although there are still occasions when teachers' introductions go on for too long. Work is better matched to pupils' different abilities in some subjects rather than others. It is strongest in mathematics. This subject is taught within ability 'sets' throughout the school, but even within the sets teachers are careful to arrange activities that appropriately challenge, for example, the most able within the set. There are occasions in other subjects, however, when all in the class are given similar work to do. When, for example, all have similar prompt sheets to complete, there can be too little opportunity for the most able pupils to extend themselves.

Teachers and other staff know the pupils' needs well and there are good arrangements for ensuring their welfare. Medical and first aid needs are met, and pupils and their parents comment favourably on how well any incidents, for example of bullying, are dealt with. One parent referring to such a past incident told inspectors, 'I was informed by the headteacher and it was sorted out.' Parents and carers also commend the school's success in 'helping those who are behind to catch up'. As one parent wrote, 'My child had a period of being unsettled at school recently, and I cannot praise the school enough for their help in sorting things out.' Another summed the school up as: 'Always helpful, always supportive.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and leadership team have moved the school a long way since its last inspection. Detailed tracking of each pupil's progress, the follow-up with teachers of thorough monitoring of their lessons and of pupils' learning, and the introduction of a range of initiatives to enhance pupils' enjoyment of school, have all contributed to the improved provision and accelerated outcomes. The governing body, too, have developed their roles, so that they are now better equipped not merely to support the school but also to challenge leaders over the school's work. They have ensured that arrangements for pupils' safeguarding are rigorous and are compliant with the latest government requirements. As a result, every parent and carer who responded to the inspection questionnaire indicated that the school keeps their child safe.

The well-targeted support given to those pupils with additional learning needs, including the small number learning English as an additional language, has helped them to make similarly good progress to their peers. Leaders also promote equality of opportunity well through systems that, for example, home in on any variation in performance of any different groups within the school. This analysis is followed up to ensure that interventions, such as personalised or small-group support, are put in place to narrow the gap where pupils are identified as falling behind. There are similarly good arrangements for promoting community cohesion. Pupils share what they have learnt on fire safety, for example, by going out into the community to advise elderly relatives on risks in their homes. The school's links with a school in India, with which pupils exchange letters and artwork, give them an insight into life in another part of the world. There are no similar links with other schools in the United Kingdom but, in assessing its work on community cohesion, the school has identified this as a gap and is currently working on developing a similar partnership. Pupils learn and show they care about issues and events affecting the locality, as well as different parts of Britain and the wider world. They raise funds for a range of local, national and international charities, including those of their own choosing.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
	2

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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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers express positive views about almost all aspects of the school. Several indicated concerns over the management of behaviour but inspectors saw consistently good behaviour in lessons and around the school. Although inspectors judge that the school provides good information to parents and carers, some parents told inspectors that they would like more information about their child's progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Croft Junior 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 77 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 279 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	38	46	60	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	48	40	52	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	38	43	56	5	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	36	45	58	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	38	47	61	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	38	46	60	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	35	49	64	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)	19	25	52	68	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	32	50	65	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	25	47	61	10	13	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	27	50	65	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	42	41	53	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	47	38	49	3	4	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

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.



21 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Croft Junior School, Nuneaton, CV10 8ER

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. You told us you thought Croft Junior is a good school. We agree. It is a well run school where good teaching helps you to make good progress to reach above average standards. What especially impressed us about your school was the way in which staff make the curriculum interesting and exciting for you. I hope none of you lost your heads when Henry VIII came to visit! We were pleased to see how well behaved you are and how well you all get on together. Staff take good care of you and, as a result, you feel safe at school. You also share with others what you learn about safety, so you are playing your part, too, in looking out for others.

Although yours is a good school, along with your headteacher and other school leaders, we were on the lookout for ways of making it even better. You mostly get through a lot of work in lessons, but there are some occasions when there is not quite enough time left after the teacher's explanations for you to write as much as you could. That is something we have asked the school to improve. We have also asked them to make sure that the learning intentions always focus on what you should be learning rather than just what you are expected to do. When you are busily writing, you sometimes forget the success criteria that your teacher agreed with you at the start of the lesson. We have suggested, therefore, that they remind you of these so that you always have a clear idea of how well you are doing. Teachers' marking gives you lots of pointers on how to move your work on in English, and we would like to see you given guidance in other subjects that is just as good. You can help to improve your work by always taking care to read and respond to your teachers' comments. We would also like to see work always pitched at the right level for each of you. Occasionally, it can be a bit too easy for some of you.

Thank you again for being so polite and helpful on our visit, and our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector

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