

Newnham Croft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110658
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	354314
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Kerstin Middleton
Headteacher	Jacqueline Jones
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, one of whom visited the school for half a day specifically to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures. The inspectors observed nine teachers as they visited 15 lessons, including observations with a specific focus on pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, some of the teaching staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, and pupils, and looked at a range of information, including data showing the progress made by pupils and samples of pupils' work. Questionnaires returned by 86 parents, 111 pupils, and 21 members of staff were analysed.

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

- the extent to which the school is able to substantiate its own evaluation that pupils make good progress, including girls and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in Key Stage 2
- the curriculum's relevance to the needs of individuals and groups of pupils and the impact of a large investment in information and communication technology (ICT) on pupils' use of computers as a day-to-day tool for learning
- the impact of leadership by the headteacher on the outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

Newnham Croft is an average-sized primary school close to the centre of Cambridge. One of its key characteristics is the high turnover of pupils in all year groups, most of which result from parents' short-term placements at the university. In Year 6, for example, almost one third of the pupils are new to the school this year. White British and minority ethnic pupils are equally represented. Typically, there are pupils from well over 30 countries at the school at any one time, and about a quarter of these arrive at an early stage of learning to communicate in English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is about half the national average. Most of these have general learning difficulties, including behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. In previous years, there has been a high turnover of staff. The headteacher took up her post two and a half years ago. Prior to her appointment there had been six headteachers within the previous ten years. There have recently been changes in the governing body. Newnham Croft has accreditation as an International School.

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

Newnham Croft Primary is a good school because its pupils learn well as a result of good teaching. Pupils also make excellent gains in many aspects of their personal development and well-being because of the outstanding care, guidance and support provided for them. Almost all pupils say that they feel safe at school. They have an exceptionally clear understanding of what they need to do to keep fit and healthy, and there is a high take-up rate in the wide range of sporting activities provided. Pupils also make outstanding contributions to the day-to-day life of the school. Despite the year-on-year fluctuations in attainment caused by the high mobility of pupils, standards in English, mathematics and science are typically above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils display good levels of skill in using information and communication technology (ICT), and inspectors saw many examples of high-quality artwork in all year groups.

One of the key achievements of the headteacher has been the provision of stability through the development of a strong sense of teamwork among staff, and the involvement of all members of the school community in developing its 'core values'. In response to the inspection questionnaire, the staff said they are proud to work at the school. They feel that their contributions are valued; they know what the school's aims are, and are fully involved in trying to achieve these. Many parents wrote appreciatively about the staff. Typical of these comments is: 'The teaching and support staff are incredibly dedicated, with some truly outstanding practitioners amongst them.' Another added: 'The teachers are all very motivated, creative and engaging, making the teaching a real experience for the children. My child comes home happy!'

A further achievement of the headteacher has been the introduction of an assessment tracking system and a new assessment team to provide continuously good-quality monitoring of pupils' progress. At present, this only provides a secure picture of the progress made during the course of the current school year. This is because some assessments, made during the period of instability in staffing, were shown by the inspection to be unreliable and cannot, therefore, be used as the 'base line' for calculating progress over an extended period, such as a key stage. Nonetheless, a scrutiny of the work completed by pupils during the course of the current school year showed good progress, although it also confirmed the picture evident in observations of lessons that teaching and learning is inconsistent. There is some outstanding teaching which motivates pupils highly and captures their imagination, but this is in the minority of lessons. In some instances where teaching is only satisfactory, the lower-attaining pupils lose concentration or are unable to complete their tasks. This occurs when teachers talk for too long and do not recognise that these pupils often need extra time to complete their work. Teachers do not always deploy their teaching assistants well

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enough. Occasionally, these key personnel spend too much lesson time recording assessments of pupils' response to teaching rather than working with the pupils. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, but the quality of marking is inconsistent and does not focus enough on the targets that pupils need to attain. There is some good practice, but too often marking comprises solely ticks and encouraging comments. Where developmental remarks are made, pupils do not act on them. Consequently, the same errors recur.

In the Reception classes, children settle quickly and make good gains in their learning. Their progress is carefully monitored but the way in which assessments recording children's progress are collated does not provide a comprehensive record of children's experiences across all areas of learning.

The curriculum has a number of outstanding features. One of these is the celebration of the wide-ranging cultural diversity within the school community. Parents wholeheartedly agree. One commented: 'The international flavour of the school is rightly highlighted, and the children gain incalculable benefit from sharing their day-to-day lives with others from all around the world.'

It is greatly to the credit of governors past and present that major contributions to pupils' good learning, through improvements in the premises and provision for ICT, have been successfully completed. The school's evaluation of its own effectiveness is accurate. However, despite the improvements made, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is judged to be good rather than outstanding. This is because not enough progress has been made in improving teachers' marking of pupils' work, which was an area for improvement identified at the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - using existing expertise to increase the proportion of outstanding lessons
 - ensuring that the lower-attaining pupils have enough time to complete their tasks, and deploy teaching assistants more effectively to support these pupils in lessons
 - developing greater consistency in teachers' marking of pupils' work, including a clear focus on the targets that pupils need to attain.
- Ensure that the assessments recording children's progress in the Reception classes are collated into a clear single document for each child.

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

The pupils currently in Year 6 are well on course to meet or exceed the targets set for them and to improve on the standards achieved by Year 6 pupils last year. However, in most year groups, pupils' work is frequently untidy.

The well planned curriculum, placing a strong emphasis on first-hand experiences, together with highly skilled teaching results in some examples of outstanding gains in

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learning. For example, a Year 2 lesson captured the interest of all pupils as they closely observed a variety of animals, including a tarantula, a scorpion, a chameleon, snakes and a large lizard. The pupils made good use of photography to help record their experiences and the occasion helped promote excellent listening and questioning skills. As well as the learning in science and geography, the lesson also resulted in many examples of high-quality observational drawings.

Despite occasional instances when some lower-attaining pupils are not fully supported in lessons, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress overall. Inspectors found little difference between the performance of girls and boys.

Pupils' questionnaires showed some concern about behaviour. Discussions with pupils showed that these generally relate to minor misdemeanours such as talking in class. Pupils were very clear that bullying is not an issue. A very clear moral code permeates all aspects of school life. Pupils are unfailingly polite and well mannered.

Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is a significant strength. Pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education and for the world of work. However, despite the school's rigorous promotion of good attendance, their attendance rates are only average. In most cases, this is due to holidays taken in term time. The pupils are immensely proud of their school, and the older ones, in particular, thrive on the many opportunities provided to take responsibility. For instance, they help serve the meals at lunchtimes, and, as 'Power Rangers', help conserve energy. The school's inclusive ethos is clearly demonstrated by the way in which it ensures opportunities for all pupils to take some sort of responsibility. For instance, a pupil with complex needs grew in confidence and successfully completed the task of supporting a child in the Reception class in producing aboriginal-style artwork.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1

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 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 Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching was good or better in the majority of the lessons seen. In most lessons, teachers successfully provide achievable challenges for pupils of different levels of attainment. For example, tasks for Year 5 pupils in mathematics, based on comparisons between climate data for the United Kingdom and Australia, were pitched at low, middle and high ability levels. In addition, a teaching assistant provided support where it was most needed. The curriculum makes a good impact on pupils' attainment and progress. The inspection took place during an 'International Week', and while teachers made good use of the theme to help capture pupils' interest and imagination, in some instances teachers' interpretation of the theme lacked flair. A good example of highly effective use of thematic planning was evident in the Reception/Year 1 class, where a study of Japanese culture resulted in many enjoyable and highly successful learning experiences across all aspects of the curriculum. Pupils were greatly challenged, for example, when solving sudokus, and used ICT well to produce booklets. Further excellent features of the curriculum are the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and enrichment activities, such as the recent 'Maths Challenge' which involved pupils working in competition with other schools.

Parents are keen partners in their children's learning and provide valuable help in supporting activities in school. For instance, a parent-helper worked well in partnership with the school cook to provide all of the Reception/Year 1 pupils with the experience of making sushi. The extent of parents' commitment is evident in the fact that more than 70 have undertaken the checks required in order to work with pupils. A particularly noteworthy feature of the high-quality provision for pupils' well-being is the excellent standard of meals, prepared and cooked on the premises. The quality of day-to-day pastoral care provided for pupils is exceptional. New entrants are very quickly assessed and their individual needs identified. On entry to the Reception Year, induction procedures are exceptionally thorough, with visits by the staff to meet the children in their nursery settings and a number of opportunities for children and their parents to become acquainted with the school. Transition arrangements at the end of Year 6 help ensure that pupils are very well prepared for the next phase of their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2

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The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

A large majority of the parents and most of the pupils feel that the school is led and managed well. The very clear direction provided for the school is strongly driven by the headteacher's ambitious vision for the future, which is shared by all staff. At the heart of all initiatives is a determination to further improve teaching and learning. For example, teachers' assessments of pupils' progress are now far more accurate than in previous years and there is a strong focus on ensuring that learners are highly motivated by first-hand experiences. Targets are constantly reviewed to ensure that they are both realistic and challenging, consequently pupils make good progress. The governing body knows the school and its community well and takes a close interest in the well-being of the pupils. It is effective in holding the school to account for its actions.

Most of the parents who returned the inspection questionnaires felt that the school is good at looking after their children. Safeguarding procedures have a high profile and are rigorously applied. All of the required documentation is in place, although the complaints procedures have only recently been completed. The school's clear commitment to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination is implicit in all its actions. While there is a very strong commitment to promote community cohesion, the policy statement lacks detail and the impact of actions is not monitored systematically. However, the impact of the school's work is that it is at the heart of its community, and pupils clearly appreciate other cultural traditions.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	1
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

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

In most instances, provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is well led. Most children join the Reception classes with attainment that is above what is normally expected at this age in most areas of learning. The exception is in communication, language and literacy, where attainment is generally at or below expectations. Children make good progress and, by the time they transfer to Year 1, they are typically working securely within the goals expected at this age, although attainment in linking sounds and letters is below expectations. In both classes, children enjoy working on a wide range of tasks. There is a good balance, both indoors and out, between activities directed by adults and those which require children to make their own choices. At all times, high priority is given to the welfare of the children. Their progress is carefully monitored and the activities provided are adjusted in response to individual needs. The records of children's progress reflect the more formal approach to learning found in Key Stages 1 and 2 as children's achievements are set out in separate books for literacy, numeracy and 'topics'. This method of recording progress does not provide a clear enough overview of the ways in which a single learning task can challenge children at different levels within a number of areas of learning. This means that opportunities to develop children's skills further can sometimes be missed.

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

Almost all parents say that they are happy with their children's experiences at school. However, the areas of common concern, shared by a minority of parents are the way in which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and the quality of communication between school and home. Inspection findings do not support the views expressed about the management of pupils' behaviour, nor is it supported by the pupils interviewed who said that adults deal quickly with any instances that occur. With regard to the concerns about communications, inspection evidence shows that these are generally similar to those of other schools. However, the headteacher acknowledges that work needs to be done to improve electronic means of communication, including the

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school website.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Newnham 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 86 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 224 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	60	32	37	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	48	56	33	38	3	3	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	20	23	46	53	16	19	3	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	35	40	47	12	14	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	41	48	40	47	4	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	26	46	53	17	20	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	42	44	51	4	5	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)	29	34	33	38	9	10	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	40	32	37	14	16	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	21	40	47	15	17	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	28	32	37	14	16	5	6
The school is led and managed effectively	30	35	32	37	15	17	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	47	41	48	5	6	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.



14 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Newnham Croft Primary School, Cambridge, CB3 9JF

On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to thank you very much for being so helpful when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and looking at your work. Your parents think that you go to a good school, and we agree. Below is a list of some of the things we liked best.

You learn well in lessons and make good progress because you are taught well and also because you are really interested in the exciting things teachers plan for you. We especially enjoyed looking at the work produced by those of you in Year 2 after your lesson involving creatures such as snakes, a scorpion and a tarantula! Some of the drawings you did were really excellent.

By the time you leave, at the end of Year 6, the standard of your work is better than in many schools, although we were disappointed that some of your written work is so untidy. You can help to improve this by taking greater care in the presentation of your work.

You develop your personal skills very well. This is important in helping you to become good citizens in the future. We were impressed by your good behaviour and the way you get on well with each other.

We particularly liked all of the activities you can take part in after school.

All of the adults in your school make sure that you are well looked after.

The people who run your school are doing a good job.

Every school has something that could be improved, and this is what we have asked your school to concentrate on to help you to do even better.

We would like you to make even better progress, so your teachers need to make sure that you all have enough time to complete your work in lessons and get extra help whenever you need it. We also think that teachers could help you to improve by finding better ways of marking your work.

We would like teachers to find a better way of recording the progress made by children in the Reception classes.

I wish you great success in the future.

Yours sincerely
Mike Thompson
Lead inspector

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