

Crays Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114810
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	290040
Inspection date	4 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Sandra Tweddell

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 on roll	
School	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Lang
Headteacher	Mrs S Goodwin
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2002
School address	London Road Crays Hill Billericay Essex CM11 2UZ
Telephone number	01268 521914
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small school that serves predominantly children from travelling families of Irish heritage and a small number from mixed race and White UK backgrounds. Over half the children have learning difficulties or disabilities and many more are entitled to free school meals than schools nationally. The context of the school has changed significantly since the last inspection, with withdrawal of all of the children from the local village in 2004, the mass resignation of the governing body and many staff changes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Crays Hill Primary is a good school in which pupils achieve well. It gives good value for money. The headteacher is an inspiring leader who, with staff and governors, has worked tirelessly to build a school with an exciting learning environment and a strong focus on basic skills. Rigorous self-evaluation draws in a wide range of expertise from outside the school to give objectivity. The inspection endorses its accuracy. Parents are fulsome in their praise for the school, saying that their children cannot wait to get to school. The capacity for further improvement is particularly strong.

Many children enter the school with poor literacy skills. They make good progress in the reception class because the provision is good and they are prepared well to enter Year 1. Their good progress continues throughout the school because they enjoy the imaginative teaching. Although a number of pupils achieve the standards expected, generally standards remain low because most children do not attend other schools when they travel, so their education is intermittent. An effective programme reintegrates children when they return from their travels.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding as the school sees this as the key to good academic development. Good care, support and guidance and the strong aspects of the satisfactory curriculum support this exceptionally well. Behaviour is very good. Pupils learn skills of decision-making through their involvement in discussions about school life, such as the school's behaviour policy and how to live safely. They have a very good understanding of a healthy lifestyle and one parent reported that her child will now eat fruit at home. Attendance is satisfactory due to the excellent systems used by the school.

Teaching and learning are good and an outstanding feature is the use of professional development to shape teaching to the needs of the school community. Lessons entice pupils to learn through the range of attractive resources and sometimes an air of mystery that creates anticipation amongst the pupils. Assessment is used well to track the progress of pupils and is starting to go beyond English and mathematics. Pupils are involved in setting their own targets but need more guidance as to how to reach them. The focus on literacy and numeracy is sometimes at the expense of other subjects. Information and communication technology (ICT) has had a low profile until recently, although pupils use ICT when they publish their writing.

Leadership and management are good and the leadership of the headteacher is excellent. All teachers are involved in the management of the school, including monitoring the quality of the school's work. This style of leadership has built a close team of teachers who share the vision for the school and who work hard to achieve it. Excellent leadership of the governing body enables governors to understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This knowledge allows them to challenge the school effectively. Partnership with external agencies is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by bringing more depth into subjects other than literacy and numeracy.
- Increase pupils' expertise in ICT.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the reception class with low attainment in literacy, numeracy and personal development. Achievement is good in the reception class and throughout the school. When pupils are in school, they make good progress because of the effective teaching but inevitably, their intermittent schooling affects standards, which are generally low. However, the school has high expectations for all its pupils and so some attain standards in line with what is expected, for example, pupils in Year 6 had their poems published in a local anthology of poetry. Setting targets for the school is difficult as forecasts are affected by the changing population. The large number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve well in relation to their starting points as do the few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. There is little difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This area is excellent and underpins all the school's work. The youngest pupils achieve very well as the curriculum is tailored to meet their needs. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils' behaviour is very good and they learn useful skills of negotiation and decision-making. Healthy, organic school lunches help them to understand about eating well. They learn to be proud of their heritage in order to tackle any racist comments about it, and to appreciate the range and diversity of cultures other than their own. Pupils understand about safety through, for example, how to use games and toys safely. Some of the pupils act as play pals or peer mentors so they gain understanding of the need to care for one another. This supports their contribution to the community, along with their fund-raising for a range of charities at home and across the world. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils attend regularly when they are not travelling because they love to come to school. Poetry written by pupils expresses their pride in their heritage. Preparation for their future economic well-being is good. Year 6 pupils manage a budget and all pupils learn about the importance of inter-personal skills in the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and aspects of teaching are excellent, particularly in the way lessons promote enjoyment of learning. There is a very strong and appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy. Teachers have a very good understanding of the learning needs of the pupils they teach so lessons excite pupils' curiosity and are stimulating. One class was held spellbound as a teacher tantalisingly pulled treasures out of a sack. This lesson developed good knowledge and understanding in a range of subjects. Pupils are encouraged to 'stop and think', which develops their skills of reasoning and supports literacy as they think through their ideas and the vocabulary needed to express them. Assessment is used well to set class targets and pupils evaluate their own work and set targets for themselves. Marking does not always refer to the targets and in English is sometimes about spelling and grammar and not the equally important quality of writing. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked not only in English and mathematics, but also in personal and social development, science, and citizenship.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with good features. It is effectively designed to take account of the needs of pupils in the school, is responsive to the changing population and imaginatively draws on a range of resources, such as an arts group. Pupils who leave to travel are supported by a well-designed pack so they can continue their education should they choose. Excellent displays around the school contribute to the good learning environment. Concern for pupils' personal development is reflected in the strong provision, such as assemblies, led as a family occasion with all pupils taking part. The curriculum for the youngest children is well planned to meet their many needs and enables them to achieve well. A wide range of activities and a satisfactory range of lunch-time clubs enrich the curriculum. The school draws very well on the culture of its pupils and also promotes a good understanding of the richness and diversity of other cultures. As the school rightly focuses on basic skills, other subjects sometimes lack a depth of coverage. ICT has been strengthened recently but there is more to do to enable pupils to use it proficiently to aid their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care and guidance are good overall and pupils' personal guidance is excellent. Systems to ensure the safety of pupils are rigorous. Teachers work very effectively with other agencies to support both children and their families, especially those with learning difficulties or disabilities. Successful systems promote good behaviour. A wide range of approaches successfully encourages parents to send their children to school when they are in the village so attendance is broadly average. A programme to re-integrate those who return after travelling is thoughtful and effective. Pupils who suddenly arrive in the school receive a good programme of induction that prepares them for school life. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils know their targets and help to set their own for their personal development. However, they are not always clear about how they can reach their academic targets. Many pupils are victims of racism from outside the school and this is tackled well by encouraging them to take pride in their culture and then extending this into an understanding and appreciation of other cultures.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and the leadership of the headteacher is excellent. Her insight, vision and drive have moved the school on from its position of three years ago. The governing body is exceptionally well led by the chair and has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers work closely as a team and share the school's vision of pupils' high achievement in personal and academic development. This is because all work together as a successful management team. Monitoring of the school's work is perceptive and the resulting self-evaluation rigorous and accurate. Excellent use is made of specialist resources from outside the school to bring in expertise and to validate judgments about the provision and standards. Professional development is used exceptionally well and national guidance for Travellers' education is used effectively. The school goes out of its way to involve parents in their children's education and parents hold the school in high regard. The school has changed significantly since the last inspection but the areas for improvement have

been dealt with well. Given the close partnership between staff and the governors and the tireless commitment of all staff, the school has very good capacity to continue to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

5 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Crays Hill Primary School, Essex, CM11 2UZ.

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed your assembly, especially when you fired the rocket and said a prayer or made a wish. Thank you also to the children who looked after me at lunchtime. It was good to talk with you and I was pleased at how much you knew about how to live healthy lives.

You go to a good school. Mrs Goodwin, the governors and all the adults work very hard to make sure that lessons are fun so you learn well and make good progress. Your parents told me about how you look forward to school and I could see why when I watched you learning in drama and other lessons. You were all eager to take part and to answer questions. I was impressed at the way you stopped to think about what you were doing before you spoke. Your answers were very clear because of this.

Your behaviour is very good and you learn to take care of one another and how to stay safe. You are rightly proud of your lifestyle and I enjoyed reading the poems that pupils in Year 6 wrote about it. You must have been very pleased to have some of your poems published in an anthology of poetry.

I have made two suggestions as to how your learning can be even better. Your work in English and mathematics improves a great deal because many of your lessons are in these two subjects. It would be good if all subjects were treated in the same way. The second suggestion is to help you to learn more by using computers more often.

Thank you once again for making my visit so enjoyable. To those of you who move around the world, enjoy your travels and to all of you, good luck with your future lives.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Tweddell Lead Inspector