

Croft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124054
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	292875
Inspection dates	24–25 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

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	182
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frank Lewis, MBE
Headteacher	Teresa McGregor
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2002
School address	Rugeley Road Armitage Rugeley WS15 4AZ
Telephone number	01543 490261
Fax number	01543 490261

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Croft Primary School is smaller than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. The school has gained Active Mark Gold and the Charter Mark from the Football Association.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate its high quality care and the approachability of the staff. One comment captures the views of many: 'We consider our children fortunate to attend The Croft. They are very happy and thrive in this family environment.'

Pupils' outstanding personal development is reflected in their above average attendance and their extremely positive attitudes to learning. Pupils' outstanding commitment to their schoolwork, including their enthusiasm and exemplary behaviour, is an important factor in their good achievement. Pupils like to take lots of exercise and eat healthily and they know how to keep safe. They make an outstanding contribution to their school and the wider communities. Older pupils are often seen helping the younger ones. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and enable pupils to gain confidence and feel safe. Care, guidance and support are good and the school gives very high priority to pupils' pastoral care. As one pupil said, 'I really love it here because the teachers look after us so well'.

Standards are broadly average and achievement is good. By the end of Year 6, standards are average in English and science and slightly above in mathematics. Pupils make good progress in mathematics and science. Although achievement overall is good, pupils' progress in English slows down in Key Stage 2. Pupils continue to do well in reading but their progress in writing is uneven. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because their needs are well met. Children get off to a good start in the Reception class because of good teaching and an interesting range of activities. They make good progress from their below average starting points to reach standards at the start of Year 1 that are just a little below average.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The good teaching of mathematics and science enables pupils to achieve well in these subjects. The school has worked very hard to improve the teaching of English, particularly writing, and many teachers have successfully implemented improved teaching methods. This has accelerated pupils' achievement in English. Occasionally, in Key Stage 2, expectations of pupils' standards of writing are not high enough and pupils do not always get sufficient opportunities to practise their writing skills. Pupils do not always remember or fully understand their targets. Teachers' marking does not usually refer to targets or consistently tell pupils how to improve their work. This holds back pupils' progress, particularly in writing. The curriculum is good and offers an outstanding range of exciting extra-curricular activities that make a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development and their enjoyment of school.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has been instrumental in creating a strong family ethos and ensures that the school's mission statement, 'We Care', is thoroughly reflected in the school's work. She successfully leads an able management team who also have a strong focus on continuous improvement. Accurate self-evaluation has resulted in the school identifying where its relative weaknesses lie and doing something about them. The school has made good progress since the last inspection, having significantly improved pupils' knowledge of the wider world. This shows it has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing in Key Stage 2 by ensuring that teachers' expectations are consistently high and pupils get sufficient opportunities to practise their skills.
- Ensure that pupils know exactly what they have to do to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and pupils reach broadly average standards. Children enter the Reception class with standards that are below average, especially in the areas of personal development and language and literacy. They make good progress in the Reception class because of good provision and reach standards that are just below average. Although children have significantly improved many of their skills, they are still a little behind in writing and emotional development. Few pupils reach the very highest levels of skills development.

Pupils continue to make good progress through Years 1 and 2 because of good teaching. By the end of Year 2, standards are very similar to the national average. Pupils make good progress in reading in Key Stage 2 but their progress in writing is not as rapid. The school has recognised this and has developed strategies that are starting to accelerate progress in writing. However, differences in teachers' expectations are reflected in the quality and quantity of writing that is produced.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Relationships between pupils are terrific. This is shown in the way older pupils help and support younger pupils at lunchtimes and playtimes. Pupils develop strong empathy and really care for one another as a result of the school's strong focus on promoting human values. Pupils have excellent attitudes to their school work and high levels of cooperation promote good learning. Pupils' exceptional enjoyment of learning is reflected in their good attendance. They work very hard and are extremely enthusiastic; when a teacher asks a question, hands just shoot up. Pupils are developing a good understanding of a range of cultures. They learn to value the world around them through the school's experience days, which they very much appreciate. Pupils develop poise, confidence and secure basic skills and by the time they reach the end of Year 6 they are well prepared for secondary school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lively teaching engages pupils well, makes learning enjoyable and promotes good achievement. Pupils are actively encouraged to learn together through the good use of talk partners and this is helping to promote pupils' outstanding personal development. Relationships are very good. Pupils know that their answers will be valued and this boosts their confidence. Interactive whiteboards are used well both to make lessons more interesting and to promote better understanding. Planning is usually very thorough and activities are usually well matched to pupils' abilities, especially in mathematics and science where teachers have very good subject knowledge. Occasionally, expectations of older pupils' standards of writing are not high enough

and this slows progress. Learning support assistants are usually very effective but sometimes their talents are underused during the introduction to lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good in the Reception class, where all areas of learning are well covered. Similarly in Years 1 to 6, good provision is made for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The school takes care to provide a broad range of worthwhile learning opportunities, including the teaching of two languages. Links between subjects are often used well to reinforce learning, for example, the good use of tables, charts and graphs in science supports good achievement in mathematics. Opportunities for extended writing are improving but are uneven across Key Stage 2. When pupils are set by ability, the arrangements work very well and ensure that pupils of all abilities have appropriate challenge. Time is used very effectively. A wide range of well organised play activities at breaks and lunchtime supports pupils' outstanding personal development. A marvellous range of visits, visitors and school clubs enriches the curriculum and makes a valuable contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. The outstanding provision for sport helps pupils keep fit and healthy and there is also very good provision for health education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good and promotes good achievement and outstanding personal development. The school is a very caring community where relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Consequently, pupils feel valued and secure, and know that staff have their best interests at heart. Child protection procedures are robust and regular health and safety checks are carried out. The school works well with external agencies to provide extra help for pupils when this is required. Good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities promotes their good achievement. Pupils' academic performance is carefully checked and pupils who are at risk of underachieving are quickly identified and well supported. The setting of short-term targets that identify how pupils can improve their work is in the early stages of development. Targets are not always expressed in child-friendly language and are not always remembered by pupils. Inconsistencies in the quality of marking mean that pupils are not always given clear enough guidance on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership from the headteacher ensures that there is a clear focus on raising standards and on providing high standards of care. Staff work very well as a team and are also committed to continual improvement. This is reflected in pupils' good achievement and outstanding personal development. Procedures for checking the school's work are good and ensure that areas for development are accurately identified. The school has worked very hard to improve achievement in English, particularly in writing in Key Stage 2. These efforts have yet to fully impact, partly because the strategies are still fairly new but also because there are still variations in the quality of teaching of writing in Key Stage 2 which have not been fully addressed. There are very effective links with parents, the community, external agencies and other education

providers that contribute well to pupils' good achievement and outstanding personal development. Governors know the school well and provide effective supportive and challenge.

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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?	2
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	3
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	2
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	1
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?	2
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	2
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

26 April 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Croft Primary School, Rugeley, Staffordshire WS15 4AZ

Thank you for being so friendly and polite when we came to inspect your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and listened very carefully to what you had to say. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

You are quite right to be proud of your school. It is good. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour, both in and out of lessons. You really enjoy school because you all get on well together and have a good range of things to do to help you learn. You make an outstanding contribution to your school – well done! It was lovely to see the older pupils helping the younger ones. It was good to hear that you know how to keep fit and healthy.

The people who run your school do a good job. They make sure the school is a very happy place where you are well cared for and safe. You told us that your teachers look after you very well and you find them very helpful. You work very hard in your lessons. The teaching at your school is good. We think it could be even better if you had targets that were easier to understand and teachers' marking always told you exactly how to improve your work. You are all doing very well in mathematics and science but not quite as well in English. We have asked the teachers to help the older pupils do better in writing.

Thank you again for being such good company.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Susan Walsh Lead inspector