



# Croft Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

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Better  
education  
and care

**Unique Reference Number** 121485  
**Local Authority** North Yorkshire  
**Inspection number** 292133  
**Inspection date** 27 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Lesley Clark

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	South Parade
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled		Croft-on-Tees, Darlington
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11		County Durham DL2 2SP
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01325 720528
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	104	<b>Fax number</b>	01325 722324
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Ms Alison Russell
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Brenda Higgins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 March 2001		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

This small Church of England primary school, based in Croft village, serves several other small rural villages and isolated farms. A third of pupils come from further afield, from more socio-economically disadvantaged urban areas. Most children therefore travel some distance to get to school. The school is currently over-subscribed and has a waiting list. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little above average at 20% and the proportion with statements of special educational need is much higher than usual. Although there is no nursery, there is a pre-reception class operating in the afternoons the term before children start full-time school. The school gained an International School Award in the summer celebrating its commitment to education in the wider world.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

This is an outstanding school. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 6 and have stayed at a high level for the past five years. Standards are particularly high in reading, mathematics and science, and pupils clearly enjoy the lively participation their teachers expect of them in these lessons. Standards in writing are similar but usually a slightly smaller proportion reaches higher standards than in mathematics and science. While there is outstanding provision for pupils to discuss and explain their ideas, and to measure their writing against learning targets, there are comparatively few opportunities for pupils to use writing for essential or enjoyable purposes through drama or in real-life situations. Consequently, they tend to see writing as 'hard work'. Pupils achieve outstandingly well throughout their time in school because teaching is excellent. Children make very good progress in the Reception class. They quickly become independent and purposeful learners because of outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage which pays close attention to their individual needs. It is a similar picture in Years 1 to 6 with lively teaching, together with carefully targeted support, to help slower learners catch up.

Pupils follow an outstanding curriculum, full of variety and interest, which ensures they have a wealth of learning experiences both with their classmates and with pupils in other schools. It prepares them very well indeed for their future lives and for being part of a European community. The school takes exceptionally good care of its pupils. One of the main reasons why pupils do so well is the extremely good use of assessment to track pupils' progress but also to help teachers decide what needs to be taught. Many children follow individualised learning plans and this helps both those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have special gifts to make the most of their talents. Provision for learners who have difficulties is outstanding and most achieve nationally expected standards as a result. Behaviour is good and Year 6 pupils are proud of their responsibilities in school which include acting as play leaders for younger pupils. Personal development is outstanding as pupils learn tolerance and sympathy for different views and needs in a family-like community; this also reaches out to African and European communities where the school has strong links.

The school succeeds in its aims to provide 'a disciplined yet caring environment where all children feel valued and secure' and 'to instil in children a sense of wonder about their world'. This is because leadership, management and governance are outstanding. The headteacher's part-time teaching commitment means she is instrumental in setting high academic challenges and then 'doing her bit' to ensure that they are met. The management is underpinned by crystal clear systems that work extremely well. The school gives outstanding value for money and has excellent capacity to continue to improve.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Find ways to make writing an essential and enjoyable part of pupils' learning.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Standards are consistently well above average. Achievement is outstanding because of excellent teaching and assessment. Children enter school at a broadly average level. They settle quickly in the Reception year where outstanding provision both there and in the infant class enables them to reach above average standards by the end of Year 2. The school sets, meets and sometimes exceeds its challenging targets. Typically, nearly all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, reach nationally expected levels in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 and over half exceed them. This represents outstanding progress for all groups of pupils. Science results in 2006 took a great leap forward with 90% of pupils reaching the standards expected of more able pupils at the end of Year 6. This was because of very effective specialist teaching, featuring report writing in literacy and data handling and graphs in numeracy lessons. In addition, a science club gave pupils lots of practical experience. A similarly fun approach is needed to bring up writing standards to match these.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils behave well and throw themselves wholeheartedly into lessons, playtimes and extra-curricular clubs. Attendance is now above average because of the school's effective drive to reduce authorised absences. Year 6 play a vital role in making the school a happy place for younger ones and show a very responsible attitude both to their school community and beyond. They take the initiative to raise funds for charities and when they hold a 'French caf,' the only language spoken is French. The school council meets as a democratic body to sort out problems and suggest ideas, only involving an adult if they feel the need. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and pupils' artwork admirably expresses their wonder at their world. Links with schools at home and abroad give them insight into different cultures as well as social experiences with larger groups of children of similar ages. Pupils are exceptionally well placed in terms of their future economic well-being and fully aware of the benefits of being physically healthy.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

From the moment children enter the Reception class, their individual needs are taken fully into account. They make rapid progress because the high quality of adult support ensures purposeful learning without compromising children's independence and confidence to be curious and find out for themselves. Throughout the school, this approach benefits the very wide range of learners' ability in each mixed age class. Short bursts of intensive teaching are counterbalanced by games to practise specific

skills and times to work together or separately and to research and reflect. Liveliness and a keen sense of fun characterise much of the teaching and pupils' learning is correspondingly dynamic. Marking is first rate for it praises but makes developmental points clear. Pupils know their targets and take responsibility for meeting them. Perhaps the best feature of teaching is the use of assessment to determine precisely what needs to be taught and why.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

Not only does the school make extremely good provision for literacy, numeracy and science but all other subjects are given due weight, from skills in information and communication technology to historical research. Provision for personal, social and health education is very strong and pupils have regular times to discuss with adults matters that concern them, and so they feel secure and at ease. Speaking and listening are strongly promoted. Taking part in public debates with other schools and speaking French with foreign language teachers who have work placements in the school further help develop confidence and social poise. Links between drama, real-life situations and writing, however, are less fully exploited. Extra-curricular provision is very good and a wide range of sporting and creative opportunities enrich the curriculum very well.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Provision for pupils' welfare is outstanding and child protection procedures are robust. The systems to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are outstanding and the school has the capacity to cope successfully with a wide range of needs and abilities. Individual education plans give precise and achievable steps of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and these, together with outstanding support from learning assistants in all classes, enable pupils to do extremely well. The systems to support academic progress are outstanding and give a clear overview of progress and challenging targets to aspire to.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The school is extremely well run. The headteacher inspires and leads others, taking her fair share of teaching, assessment and leading subjects as well as fulfilling her commitment to the local authority as a consultant leader. This means that Year 5 and Year 6 pupils can be taught in year groups for literacy and numeracy, which gives them an extra boost. The decision to employ a science teacher to cover statutory preparation time and staff absences means that older pupils experience a range of teaching styles and younger ones have the security of a familiar face if their teacher is absent. Management systems are simple, clear and effective, enabling the headteacher to provide outstanding support for newly qualified teachers and those on initial teacher

training. Everything is based on stringent monitoring and evaluation to ensure that teaching and learning are as good as they can be. This is reflected in the school improvement plan which embodies the commitment to high standards and the shrewd management of financial resources to achieve them. The school's self-evaluation is absolutely accurate. Governors make an outstanding contribution to shaping educational provision and their action plan, based on similarly rigorous self-evaluation to that undertaken by the school, helps shape the school improvement plan.

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## Inspection judgements

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

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

Thank you for making me feel so welcome and for talking to me so openly about your school. I spent time talking to your headteacher, teachers and the chair of governors as well as joining you in lessons and spending time talking to you. I came to the conclusion that your school is outstanding and that you help to make it so. Here is why!

Your school is exceptionally well led and managed so that everyone feels fully included in school life. You are extremely well taught and that is why you achieve high standards in your work. You behave well and older pupils take on a lot of responsibilities, particularly helping younger children to have a good time at playtimes.

You certainly work and play with a great deal of energy and enthusiasm. No wonder your teachers want to make learning fun because you help them by being so open and responsive! I was impressed by the wide range of subjects you study and that you enjoy so many things.

Your school gives you expert support and guidance to ensure you are well cared for and develop confidence in yourselves. All this adds up to an extremely effective school where it is fun to be a pupil.

It is part of my job to point out what could be improved. Did you know that you read better than you write and that you tend to do slightly better in mathematics and science than in English? If you had the chance to do more drama or to write in situations where it really mattered what you wrote, it would improve your writing. Therefore, I have asked your headteacher and teachers to give you the chance to do this. I'm sure you'll help by working with great enthusiasm when they do.

I wish you all the best for the future and thanks again for making my time in your school so enjoyable.