

Crookhey Hall School

Independent school standard inspection report

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| Reporting inspector | Ramesh Kapadia |

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Crookhey Hall School is a day special school for boys. The school is located in a large Victorian house set in spacious grounds in a rural location near Lancaster. It is registered for pupils aged from 10 to 17 years of age. There are currently 50 boys on roll who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and all have a statement of special educational needs. They have a history of disrupted experiences in their previous educational settings. A few pupils are from mixed ethnic backgrounds and all the others are White British. All pupils come from local authorities in the Lancashire area, and a few are looked after by their local authority. A few have a long journey to and from the school each day. The school's aims are to provide a strong supportive ethos with stimulating and varied curricular experiences to enable pupils to maximise their educational potential, improve their behaviour, develop self esteem, and be prepared for their transition to adult life. The school, which opened in 1993, was last inspected in 2008.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education with good teaching that leads to pupils making good progress. It successfully achieves its aims, with most pupils developing their self-esteem and improving their behaviour. They are well prepared for adult life through a good and stimulating curriculum. Pupils are well cared for within a strong ethos, where good systems for their welfare, health and safety and for safeguarding are securely embedded. The school has improved since the previous inspection and now meets all the regulations.

Quality of education

The school's curriculum is good. There is a curriculum policy that is based on the required areas of learning, with a strong emphasis on sport, adventurous outdoor activities and vocational experiences. Schemes of work are suitable, most being based on the National Curriculum and national guidance. The broad curriculum includes the core subjects of English, mathematics and science as well as art, humanities, information and communication technology (ICT), craft, design and technology, and physical education. There are vocational courses in construction,

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

catering, horticulture, and small animal care. In addition, the curriculum includes careers guidance and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), with plans in place for learning modern foreign languages later in the term. Pupils have a choice in selecting vocational options and some attend a local college for up to a day a week to study motor mechanics. A programme of enrichment activities takes place on a Friday afternoon; it includes cooking, fishing, gardening and snowboarding. The regular outdoor activities promote pupils' physical and social skills well in an informal environment. They also develop personal and thinking skills along with greater emotional maturity, self-respect and tolerance of others through the various collaborative activities which take place.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall. The quality of teaching in the majority of lessons is good, which is in line with the school's own assessment. Many of the best lessons are in the vocational subjects, where the strong practical element engages all pupils. In art, pupils value the opportunity to make creative responses and can pursue a course leading to a GCSE qualification. In mathematics, work is matched especially carefully to pupils' previous levels of attainment and includes opportunities for solving problems and learning from varied activities.

In vocational subjects, good links are made between ideas and theory and practical activities, with some links to literacy and numeracy. However, pupils' writing skills are not promoted sufficiently well across all subjects and homework is not set on a regular basis, a point noted by parents and carers in their questionnaire returns. The best teaching is carefully targeted to address pupils' particular learning needs with a good pace suited to their capabilities; it supports their developing knowledge and understanding very effectively. Most lesson planning is good, but plans vary in quality. The best plans include appropriate details related to the timing of suitable activities, resources required, lesson objectives, strategies for assessment and learning outcomes. In a few lessons, teachers' planning includes too little detail on what the pupils should learn or the work set is not as well matched to the needs of all pupils.

Lessons are well supported by key workers who help pupils to focus on their learning to ensure they remain 'on task' and consistently engaged. The one-to-one support they provide is effective in helping pupils' to manage their behaviour and it enables the adult to deal swiftly with any incidents that arise. Pupils show good attitudes to learning and concentrate well in most lessons, especially those with a practical focus or where a variety of tasks are set.

Work in pupils' files is mostly marked well, especially in mathematics, where targets for improvement are set regularly; there is some target setting in other subjects, but this is not a consistent feature of marking. Since the previous inspection, teachers have improved their use of assessment information to plan lessons and now more consistently meet the needs of the pupils. They regularly gather information about pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons. This is well disseminated across the school and its use is helping to improve pupils' behaviour over time. The school has suitable

plans to meet the requirements of pupils' statement of special educational needs and specific targets are included in the individual education plans, which are reviewed on a regular basis. The good curricular and teaching provision ensures pupils make good progress and enables them to achieve success in external examinations.

All the pupils who left last year are in education, employment or training; one former pupil is also going to university. These are considerable achievements for pupils whose education has been severely disrupted in the past and represents good progress. Pupils were themselves positive in their pre-inspection questionnaire returns about their own progress and the extent to which the school prepares them for adult life.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as is their behaviour. In questionnaire returns, pupils said that they enjoy coming to school. This is shown in their improved attendance; a few pupils maintained a record of full attendance for the first month of the term. The large majority of pupils have made good progress in their capacity to adhere to school rules and routines and in their overall behaviour. There are good and supportive relationships with staff. Teachers and key workers deal with any occasional instances of challenging behaviour or lack of engagement in lessons sensitively.

There is a strong emphasis on improving pupils' self-esteem, as well as developing their social skills. Spiritual, as well as social development is fostered during regular outdoor activities, for example, when pupils are taught to respect the natural world and through classroom activities, for example in a course on a small animal care, which refers to the 'five freedoms', promoted by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). Pupils' moral development is supported by all staff in their respectful approach to pupils and in helping the pupils to understand and to keep to the school's rules.

There is a school council where any issues are raised and discussed. Pupils support charities and events to raise funds have included Red Nose day, Jeans4Genes, and work for the British Heart Foundation. An appreciation of cultural diversity is fostered well and has been recognised through accreditation with the International School Award, which includes a link with a school in Libya. There are occasional visits to the theatre in Blackpool. In PSHE, pupils learn about public services and institutions including the work of the armed forces.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The quality of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good and all the required policies and procedures are in place. Good supervision at break times ensures that a safe environment is created and maintained. Any incidents of anti-social behaviour are tackled quickly and effectively. There are healthy options

available in the tuck shop while lunchtime menus reflect national guidelines for healthy school dinners, which are cooked on site. Pupils participate in physical education on a weekly basis, which further supports the development of a healthy lifestyle. A smoking cessation activity was run in the summer term related to the PSHCE programme, although the incident book and discussions in the school council indicate that this has not been entirely successful. PSHCE covers aspects of personal safety and the problems associated with the misuse of drugs. Safety in workshops is good and pupils were able to explain why protective equipment is needed. There are suitable policies for welfare, health and safety and risk assessments are undertaken for educational visits.

There is an appropriate child protection policy. All staff have undergone the required safeguarding training, and the designated officers are trained as required at a higher level. The anti-bullying policy meets requirements and refers to types of bullying and to internet safety. There is a suitable first aid policy with named first aiders, who have attended suitable refresher training. Admissions and attendance registers are kept in line with statutory requirements. The school has suitable plans to meet the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school carries out all the required checks on staff and other adults. All the required information is logged on the single central register of checks as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is located in a large building with extensive grounds in a pleasant rural setting. There are sufficient classrooms for all subjects, including an ICT suite and an art studio where three-dimensional projects are possible. A refurbishment of the science classroom has been carried out recently to provide laboratory facilities. The school has developed the vocational facilities required for horticulture, construction, small animal care and catering on site and pupils have helped in being involved in tasks such as creating a garden or building potting sheds. There are recreation rooms with snooker tables for use at breaks and lunch times, as well as a hard play area and football pitches on site. There are sufficient toilets and a suitable medical room for pupils who are unwell.

Provision of information

Some regulations relating to the provision of information for parents and carers and others were not met at the time of the previous inspection. Progress has been made with the creation of a new brochure and supporting documentation, which now meets all regulations. Parents and carers are pleased with the school as is evident in their questionnaire returns which were all positive. Returns from local authorities were also positive and noted that the school provides value for money. One parent

noted that 'the school has changed my child's way of thinking and improved his ability to get on with others.'

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school received no formal complaints last year and has a complaints policy which is in line with regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in different subjects
- ensure homework is set on a more regular basis
- ensure lesson planning focuses more consistently on what pupils are expected to learn and that the work set matches each pupil's individual learning needs.

Inspection judgements

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| outstanding | good | satisfactory | inadequate |
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The quality of education

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| Overall quality of education | | ✓ | | |
| How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils | | ✓ | | |
| How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs | | ✓ | | |
| How well pupils make progress in their learning | | ✓ | | |

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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| Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | | ✓ | | |
| The behaviour of pupils | | ✓ | | |

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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|--|--|---|--|--|
| The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils | | ✓ | | |
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School details

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| School status | Independent |
| Type of school | Secondary day special school for boys with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties |
| Date school opened | December 1993 |
| Age range of pupils | 10-17 years |
| Gender of pupils | Boys |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils) | 50 |
| Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs | 50 |
| Number of pupils who are looked after | 4 |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £28,644 |
| Address of school | Garstang Road Cockerham Lancaster Lancashire LA2 0HA |
| Telephone number | 01524 792618 |
| Email address | r.adams@crookheyhallschool.co.uk |
| Headteacher | Mr Robin Adams |
| Proprietor | Acorn Care and Education |

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.



17 October 2011

Dear Boys

Inspection of Crookhey Hall School, Lancaster LA2 0HA

As you will know, I visited your school recently to look at the education you receive. I spoke to some of you as well as the staff. Many of you also filled in a questionnaire, as did some of your parents or carers, and this was very helpful. You will be pleased to hear that the quality of education at the school is good and helps you to prepare for your adult life.

Staff care for you well and treat you fairly and with respect. Most of you come to school regularly and some of you have managed to come every day so far this term. Your behaviour is mainly good. You usually get on well with each other and your teachers and other adults in the school.

You learn English, mathematics, science and ICT and many of you also enjoy art. You also have the opportunity to study a range of vocational courses, using facilities on the site, which you helped to develop, and some of you learn vehicle maintenance at a local college. Outdoor activities also feature strongly and you have good and varied opportunities for physical education. The teaching you receive is good, which helps you to make good progress overall.

I have suggested a few improvements to make the school even better. Occasionally, the work you are set is not always at the right level for each of you and I have asked the school to ensure the work always matches your level of ability. Your writing is not always as good as it could be and so I have suggested that you are given more opportunities to write in different subjects. I have also suggested that you receive homework more regularly.

Yours sincerely

Ramesh Kapadia
Lead Inspector