

Crosby High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104980
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	355670
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Hilary Ward

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Hanford
Headteacher	Mr Steve Dempsey
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2007
School address	De Villiers Avenue Crosby, Liverpool Merseyside L23 2TH
Telephone number	0151 924 3671
Fax number	0151 931 5083
Email address	head.crosbyhigh@schools.sefton.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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Manchester
M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Fifteen lessons were seen, including activities in a curricular enrichment afternoon. The work of 15 teachers was observed. They met with a group of students, senior managers, members of the governing body and had discussions with other students and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to the school's self-evaluation, students' progress, curriculum planning, safeguarding and submissions for specialist status renewal and for foundation trust status. Seventy-one parental questionnaires were analysed along with many from staff and students.

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

- How well different groups of students progress, and how effectively lessons are planned to secure this.
- Students' views on how well they are prepared for the next stages in their lives.
- How the various curricular innovations and specialist and foundation school status, improve outcomes for students.
- The contribution leaders and managers make to sustained school improvement.

Information about the school

The school has traditionally admitted students with moderate learning difficulties. In recent years, it has provided for an increasing number of students with a range of complex needs, in addition to their moderate learning difficulty, including students with speech and communication difficulties, autism spectrum conditions, social and emotional difficulties and with physical and sensory impairments. All students have a statement of special educational needs. Boys outnumber girls by about 3:1, a ratio not uncommon in schools such as this. Students are almost exclusively of White British heritage. A very small minority of students are looked after children. Almost half of the students are known to be eligible for free school meals. A number of students join the school other than at the usual time, generally transferring from mainstream secondary schools.

In 2007, the school was successful in being designated a specialist college for humanities and this was renewed in the summer of 2010. In September 2010, the school became a foundation school, and a cooperative trust was established with a range of partners to enhance and support learning.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This outstanding school has built on its reputation and the judgements made at its last inspection to further improve the quality of education and care it offers to its students. The nature of their special educational needs means students are unlikely to achieve at the national expectation for age, but the school ensures equal opportunities for all students to leave with external awards to mark their success. They do this by offering a range of curricular pathways to meet students' differing abilities, and by challenging them to perform at their very best. Parents and carers are very happy with the school, saying, for example, 'Crosby High School has gone beyond my expectations in meeting my son's complex needs and giving him all the help and support he requires.' The school's specialist status for humanities has greatly enhanced opportunities for its own students and has also benefited its partner schools. The specialism plays a significant role in the school's excellent contribution as a leader in promoting community cohesion and to students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Outstanding care, guidance and support for students are key to the great steps they take in their personal development. Their attendance is above average and they understand the need to behave very well in lessons. They develop necessary self-help and work skills so that they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stages in their lives. Almost all students choose to continue their education at a partner further education college or other continuing education providers when they leave Crosby High School.

A very large majority of students say they enjoy coming to school and feel safe there. They make at least good and often outstanding progress from their overall low starting points. Teachers and teaching assistants have improved their assessment of students' learning so that they are better able to match work to provide the necessary challenge for them to improve, although this is not always evident. There is a strong and appropriate emphasis on the learning of basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across all areas of the curriculum.

Senior leaders and the governing body reflect extremely well on the school's performance to effectively identify those areas for further development that will enhance provision even further. Staff, parents, carers and students are consulted on changes and morale is high. As a result of this vision for the future and the maintenance of high quality provision, the school has an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further increase the rate of students' progress by, in all lessons, not just the majority, sharing with students exactly what they should learn and ensuring that tasks fully challenge them to improve their work as much as they can.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students' learning is outstanding overall. Learning is at least good in almost all lessons. Students achieve a range of external awards. More-able students access GCSEs in a range of subjects and a large majority of leavers gain entry level qualifications. Many obtain vocational qualifications, sometimes with the help of partner providers and recently the school has introduced foundation learning for the growing number of students who find academic work difficult. Detailed records of students' progress show that a large majority make at least good and usually outstanding progress in all areas of their learning, especially in Years 7 to 9. Although progress continues to be good in Years 10 and 11, it does tend to be slightly slower. A very small minority of students make less progress, usually due to reaching a plateau in their learning, and these students are identified and receive additional support. Evidence from the school's own moderation and its benchmarking procedures, together with inspection evidence, indicate that overall, students make exceptional progress.

Students learn to work independently and also in teams, for example, to develop mini-enterprise projects. Any profit gained from these is used to support those less fortunate than themselves. Students at an off-site provision were designing and making Christmas crackers and toys to sell to raise funds, and others were making hovercrafts to race and learning the physics behind the activity. Some were producing a DVD to advertise and sell their products. Students clearly enjoyed and rose to the challenges that these enterprises offered.

Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They say they know staff will help if they are worried, although a very small minority expressed some concern about the behaviour of some other students. The outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development opportunities available, particularly through the school's humanities curriculum, offer students varied opportunities to reflect on emotions and experiences. They are able to make a very positive contribution in the life of the school, through school and eco councils, prefects and through community projects, such as designing a local play park and planting green areas. Attendance is high and the school has good measures in place to follow up the very few students who are persistently absent.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Most teaching is at least good and mostly outstanding. In the majority of lessons, work is extremely well matched to students' ability, particularly in literacy and numeracy. In a few sessions, particularly those which enrich the curriculum, and where students can choose their activity, teachers do not always plan so effectively for the full range of ability and age of those taking part. However, for most lessons, students are grouped to access a curriculum and teaching which is appropriate to their ability and to ensure that they can enjoy success. Teachers are increasingly supporting students to evaluate how well they have done in each lesson and to express this in a variety of ways, for example, by completing a short questionnaire to determine learning or by the use of smiley faces to demonstrate their understanding of different aspects of a lesson. The school has further training planned to develop this aspect of their work.

The rich curriculum provides a wealth of opportunities for students' learning and personal development. All Year 10 students enjoy a work experience placement, which is well matched to their interest and capability and in a few cases this has resulted in an offer of employment. Through its humanities specialism the school has developed partnerships to offer trips to countries, such as China and France. Their cultural knowledge has been further extended through links with, for example, a Muslim school in another authority.

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The school makes excellent use of teachers' and assistants' specialist knowledge to offer curricular enrichment opportunities, such as, playing in a rock band or doing floristry. It responds to students' requests for activities, such as bringing in a stand-up comedian to share the skills of his trade. There is a particularly strong link with Everton Football Club, through which Crosby High students have represented disability sport at a national level.

Provision for students' care, guidance and support is outstanding because relationships between staff and students are built on mutual trust and respect. Very effective, targeted support is given to students in lessons. Management responsibility for students' pastoral care is well organised and diligent. There are well-planned transitions into school. Options evenings and careers advice from Connexions and a range of providers, help older students make considered decisions when choosing their work experience and deciding on their destinations after leaving school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has been extremely effective in engaging all staff in a desire to aim for the best. He has built up strong partnerships. All leaders and managers and the governing body, have had a vision for the school's developments as a specialist college for humanities and, most recently, as a foundation school. This has been supported by strengthening the senior management team and creating systems to underpin the foundations of the school's policies and practice. Changes have been made in consultation with parents and carers, staff, students and other partners. The governing body has been fully engaged in supporting the school's drive for improvement and provides good challenge to senior staff.

Leaders and managers very effectively engage staff commitment to constantly drive the school forward, review and revise the curriculum, and to make improvements to teaching, learning and assessment. Arrangements for safeguarding students are good. All students are treated as individuals and the school takes very positive steps with partners, such as The Salvation Army and through its work with families and agencies, to ensure the elimination of discrimination. Progress data indicate that all groups of students are given equal opportunities to make outstanding progress overall. The school is a leader in community cohesion; it offers training to other schools and reaches out to support its local community exceptionally well.

Relationships with parents and carers are excellent, as evidenced by the very positive comments made by many parents and carers, such as, 'I could not ask for more from the school, the staff at every level give over and above the call of duty.' The school works

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highly effectively to involve parents and carers in their child's learning and shares with them and where necessary, with other agencies, responsibility for their care and well-being.

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	1
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Almost half of parents and carers returned inspection questionnaires and the overwhelming majority are entirely satisfied with the provision the school makes for its students. In addition to the comments above, one parent summed up her feelings beautifully, 'It's like watching a flower blossom or a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis.' There was one expression of concern about bullying and one about break-time supervision. The inspectors brought these to the attention of senior leaders and were satisfied that they would be appropriately dealt with. Several other parents and carers commented on the high quality of care and support both for students and for their families, and inspectors were in full agreement with these supportive comments.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Crosby High 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 71 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 144 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	63	23	32	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	47	66	21	30	2	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	49	69	20	28	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	65	24	34	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	56	79	14	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	58	28	39	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	56	27	38	1	1	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)	42	59	22	31	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	62	23	32	3	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	50	70	17	24	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	59	26	37	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	51	72	19	27	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	56	79	13	18	0	0	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 all 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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 pupils' 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.



26 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Crosby High School, Liverpool, L23 2TH

My colleague and I would like to thank you very much for welcoming us to your school recently. You were very helpful in lessons and answered our questions politely when we asked you to explain what you were doing.

We think that Crosby High School is an outstanding school. Adults look after you very well and ensure that the work you do will help you to make excellent progress and prepare you for your lives after school. We thought the activities were really interesting and some were very original, such as designing and making hovercrafts, or learning how to be a stand-up comedian. We also think that your school is extremely well led and managed and is in an excellent position to continue to make improvements.

When we visit schools, inspectors also look for things which might help to make your school better. Although we know that you and your teachers have been doing quite a lot of work to help you understand how well you are doing, we have asked them to make sure that they know exactly what they want each of you to learn in every lesson and to discuss that with you.

By the time you receive this letter it will be nearly Christmas time so we hope that you have a very happy one.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Hilary Ward

Lead inspector

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