

Crowdys Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126549
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	360104
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Scott HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	134
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Penny Lake
Headteacher	Pete Crockett
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. Twenty lessons were observed as well as the work of the school. Inspectors met with a governor, a local authority representative and a range of school staff. A range of documents were analysed, including 88 parental questionnaires, school policies and the school's own progress tracking information.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The impact of the school's focus on teaching and learning, particularly on planning and assessment on outcomes for students.
- How well the school prepares students for the next stages of learning and life.

Information about the school

Crowdys Hill School takes students from across the Swindon area with special educational needs that include complex needs and autistic spectrum disorders. Around a third of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. There is a small proportion of students from minority ethnic heritage. Around a quarter of the students are female. The number of students whose first language is believed not to be English is low. The school has a farm as part of the school provision.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Crowdys Hill School ensures that students receive exceptional care. There is a very high level of trust between students and staff and so attitudes to learning are positive and contribute a great deal to the good progress students make. Students feel very safe in the school, not only because the school deals with their concerns, and issues that arise, very well but also because there is a positive learning ethos that values the contributions made by all students.

There is a strong sense of community in the school and an effective team of staff works diligently to ensure that the needs of students are at the heart of all decision making. Leaders, teachers, classroom support assistants, governors, support staff, volunteers and professionals from a wide range of supporting agencies, including health professionals, coordinate their work with great effect.

The good curriculum is enhanced by a range of opportunities including the off-site learning opportunities, the school farm and a 'school flat'. These aspects allow students from Crowdys Hill and other schools to learn in a different environment with a clear context to learning.

Teachers and classroom support assistants work well together to ensure good teaching overall. This is improving because of the professional skills and passion for delivering the best for students with changing needs. Teaching at its best enables students to make exceptional progress. The school has developed the use of progress tracking information well to allow senior staff to monitor student progress. It recognises that greater precision in tracking and target setting will drive improvements further. This is being used by some teachers to great effect in planning detailed and personalised learning opportunities that are highly focused and effective in developing more independent learning.

Governors' commitment and passion for school improvement is strong. Policies and practice are reviewed and governors are clear about how they can develop their role still further. The school knows its strengths well and has clear priorities for development. Leaders are developing staff further to ensure all are more analytical practitioners and are increasingly accountable for students' progress. A good capacity for sustained improvement has been demonstrated in the well-established track record of development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop teaching further to ensure students' progress is even greater by
 - using assessments of learning throughout lessons to inform planning of learning opportunities that are more tailored to individuals
 - challenging all students even more so that the pace of learning is high.

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- Ensure all staff analyse outcomes to drive further improvements and accountability.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students throughout the school explained how much they enjoyed life in the school and the positive relationships they have with the staff. Students' starting points in the school are very varied for both cognitive and physical abilities. There are significant differences in outcomes and progress made by individuals but there are no issues relating to any group of students in the school. Students are known well by the staff and this, along with the very positive attitudes to learning, is a significant factor in ensuring the progress students make is good. Students make outstanding progress at times but this is less well defined by the school's tracking systems.

Students contribute a great deal to the positive ethos of the school and help to drive learning. The polite, affectionate and positive manner in which they enthused about 'the pink palace', the school farm and the flat, as well as the friendly supportive teachers, clearly indicated their enjoyment and appreciation of the opportunities they have. It also demonstrated their high confidence and strong personal development. Students are able to demonstrate noteworthy levels of understanding about healthy lifestyles, with a clear understanding of fitness, diet and personal needs.

The school has a clear approach to ensuring that students, where appropriate, successfully complete externally accredited courses, including GCSEs and Entry level certificates. The school develops students' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT well but they remain low. The school does strive to develop independence for each individual appropriate to their abilities. Opportunities to undertake courses in other local schools also helps students to develop wider skills for later life. Students are well prepared for the next stages of learning.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	3
Pupils' attendance ¹	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

There is a wide range of good practice in the school that is developing well. The best teaching had a clear focus on learning and challenged all students with well-planned individual learning opportunities. Teachers and teaching assistants, when working one to one or in small group work, assessed learning and adjusted tasks appropriately to ensure that students worked with pace and made at least good progress. When whole-class teaching took place, this was less successful and did not allow all students to access opportunities for accelerated or more independent learning.

Teachers all ensured that the learning environment was very positive and allowed students to feel safe in their learning. This was evident in the way students confidently contributed and were not inhibited if they were not sure about answers. Relationships in the classroom were very positive and most of the time, teaching assistants made a significant contribution to learning. There still remains teaching assistant time that is under-utilised by teachers. Good questioning engaged learners but too much of the questioning was closed and did not develop initial responses further. Teachers are developing opportunities for students to be more independent. In design and technology, for example, students make good use of the machinery and choose the most appropriate

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equipment and are supervised appropriately without significant intervention. Students enjoy this freedom and responsibility is taken seriously.

The curriculum is relevant and develops appropriately the skills and abilities of all students. The school is developing further opportunities to increase the challenge and tailor the learning to a more personalised experience. The school farm is an asset to the school in being able to develop learning with a very diverse and rich resource. The wide variety of animals and the range of horticultural opportunities mean that there is something for all students to excel in. The school flat allows students to develop independent living skills, and off-site opportunities help to build confidence and broaden horizons beyond the school gate.

The care of students in Crowdys Hill School is exceptional. The team of staff work diligently to ensure that the care and support of students is a key priority. The high level of training and collaboration between the staff ensures students enjoy dignity and independence within their individual limits. Effective communication within the school supports the well-being of students and encourages progress regardless of challenges faced by individuals.

The school building does impact on the way care, support and the curriculum can be provided in the school. Although the school manages its buildings well, the buildings are limiting development and provision. Some limiting issues include access and privacy. Physical education is particularly inhibited by the buildings.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leaders in the school have a clear strategy for improvement, with students central to all decisions. Staff feel valued and there is a strong commitment and clear ambition across the school. There is no room for complacency and the school has developed the progress tracking systems well. Further refinement in analysing information and ensuring teachers make even more and consistent use of the tracking information is already planned. Adults are proud to be a part of the school and are clear about the aims and how they can contribute to future developments. Teachers recognise their own strengths and are eager to develop their practice further, having made significant progress since the last inspection.

The school has outstanding partnership arrangements with a wide range of professionals and with other organisations. The support for the complex needs of students is coordinated and integrates well to ensure the focus of learning is maintained.

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Governors are regularly involved in school life and hold the school to account. They speak to staff and students and are increasingly systematic in assessing the impact of the school's work. Safeguarding procedures are good and well understood and meet government regulations. The school promotes equality and is highly inclusive, with a great deal of effort made by all to develop independence, and is effective in eliminating discrimination. The school promotes community cohesion through a range of activities and has been successful in creating a highly cohesive community within the school and with partner secondary schools. There are also plans developing well for wider international links and opportunities to develop community cohesion further.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are overwhelmingly happy with the work of the school. One parent explained, 'the farm is fantastic' and 'all of the teachers are very understanding, caring and approachable'. This was typical of the comments. The school is aware that there are occasions when parents and carers are not happy with some decisions and inspectors recognise the school's efforts to work with all parents. The school buildings are a significant and justified cause for concern for parents that appreciate the difficulties and see the school is making the best of the situation.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Crowdys Hill 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 88 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 134 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	61	29	33	3	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	56	64	28	32	0	0	2	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	58	66	25	28	1	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	57	30	34	2	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	60	68	24	27	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	59	67	23	26	4	5	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	55	37	42	1	1	2	2
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)	48	55	28	32	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	65	74	18	20	2	2	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	59	67	23	26	1	1	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	55	36	41	0	0	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	61	69	23	26	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	72	22	25	0	0	3	3

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



4 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Crowdys Hill School, Swindon, SN2 7HJ

Thank you for the very friendly and warm welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school. It was really useful being able to talk to you in lessons and around the school. It was particularly good to have lunch together and see how well you all get on. It is outstanding how you take on a great deal of responsibility for your own behaviour and how this helps you learn in lessons.

The staff work very well together and are very skilled and committed to make sure you enjoy school and achieve a great deal. They make sure your classrooms are very positive places for learning and know you very well. We think you can achieve even more and have asked them to make sure you are challenged even more and that lessons have more opportunities for each of you.

The school has outstanding care, guidance and support arrangements. There are a wide range of people and partnerships that help to make sure you can get on with the learning and make sure you are safe and healthy. You are achieving more with a range of exam courses, including GCSEs and entry level certificates. This helps to make the next steps in learning easier as you go onto college or other opportunities.

The school farm is very popular and adds a great deal to the school curriculum. The school will be refining the curriculum further so that the opportunities always enable you to be successful and achieve even more.

You have contributed a great deal to the development of your good school because of your very positive behaviour. You will need to continue your efforts and ensure that you take on the coming challenges and strive for even greater independence well done!

I wish you all the very best for your future

Yours sincerely

Paul Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector

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