

Cranbrook School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118888
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358466
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Joanna Beckford-Hall HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	770
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	315
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robin Holiday
Headteacher	Angela Daly
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2007
School address	Waterloo Road Cranbrook Kent TN17 3JD
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 24 lessons, taught by 24 different members of staff and there were four joint lesson observations with senior leaders. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, students, including sixth form students, and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised school and department improvement plans, policy documents such as risk assessments, assessment data and minutes of meetings. Inspectors also considered feedback from staff and students' questionnaires and from 92 questionnaires received from parents and carers.

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

- Current attainment for all groups of students and across subjects for Years 9 to 11 and in the sixth form.
- The effectiveness of targets and levels of challenge in lessons to help all students make at least good progress.
- The extent to which the quality of teaching is consistently good or better within and across departments.
- The quality of feedback to students to help them know how to reach targets and improve their work.
- The effectiveness of senior leaders in holding middle leaders to account for raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Information about the school

Cranbrook School is a smaller than average secondary school educating students from Year 9 to Year 13. The sixth form constitutes two fifths of the student population. Students are selected to join the school which means their attainment on entry in Year 9 is well above average. The proportions of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those who speak English as an additional language are well below those found nationally. The large majority of students are of White British ethnicity.

The school was awarded specialist status in science in 2004 and is also a designated training school.

A third of students are boarders but the boarding provision was not assessed during this inspection.

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

2

Main findings

Cranbrook School is an outstanding school. Students' achievement is outstanding and students benefit from outstanding levels of care, guidance and support, and a richly diverse curriculum. Students exhibit mature attitudes to learning, to one another as fellow students and have a good rapport with staff. Students' behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school, and their strong work ethic helps them achieve exceedingly well. Students are courteous and polite; the inspection team were impressed by the welcome from students. Students are excellent ambassadors for Cranbrook School and leaders are rightly proud of their students.

Through the combination of consistently good teaching, an outstanding curriculum and excellent care, guidance and support, students make outstanding progress to achieve results at GCSE, AS and A level which exceed those found nationally, a trend sustained for the last three years. The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSEs at A* to C grades including English and mathematics is well above national average, reaching 100% in 2008 and 2009 and 99% in 2010. Attainment of the higher grades of A* and A is equally impressively sustained at 60%. Current school data suggests this is set to rise again this year to 68%. The quality of teaching is good overall, but some lessons do not provide sufficient opportunity for students to develop independence as learners. The quality of marking is too variable and not all students receive detailed guidance about how to improve.

Students feel safe. Incidents between students are rare because they study together and often share boarding accommodation so they have established friendship groups. Leaders are swift to act if issues are brought to their attention. There is zero tolerance of any matter concerning substance misuse.

The curriculum is an outstanding feature of the school's provision and makes a significant contribution to students' progress. A good range of GCSE courses is complemented by vocational pathways delivered in partnership with a local school. Students possess outstanding skills and knowledge for their future economic well-being. High achievement in mathematics, English and information and communication technology (ICT) are enhanced through the excellent programme of enterprise, enrichment and themed weeks. The 'freedom and justice week' with speakers such as local magistrates, a prison governor and a volunteer from Amnesty International gave students rich insight about human rights throughout the world, and an intensive week of seminars to challenge thinking.

Cranbrook School has an outstanding sixth form where student achievement is high.

As in the lower school, attendance is high, supporting the good progress in Year 12 and Year 13. As a dynamic duo, the new joint heads of sixth form challenge one another as 'critical friends' and set high expectations for teaching. As a result, teaching is good and

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continually improving. Students are increasingly challenged to undertake independent research and engage in high levels of critical debate.

The headteacher and senior leaders have grasped the nettle to eradicate inadequate teaching. They have set a clear agenda to move all teaching from good to outstanding and use formal and informal observations, often jointly with middle leaders, to standardise judgements. This is beginning to include peer observations within and across departments to share best practice at the school. Senior leaders communicate expectations to staff and students well. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and includes senior and middle leaders and governors, but a few staff wish for greater involvement in the evaluation of impact of initiatives and the strategic planning for the direction of the school.

Leaders' track record of success, evident in students' high achievement and outstanding equality of opportunity, coupled with good leadership skills of senior, and, increasingly, middle leaders demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching to at least 70% by July 2012 by:
 - ensuring that planning and teaching provide high levels of challenge for all students, well matched to differing needs and promoting independent learning
 - ensuring that high quality marking is embedded throughout the school so that all students know how to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students at Cranbrook School achieve exceptionally well from starting points which are well above those found nationally. This is testament to the efforts of leaders and teaching teams to make certain that students receive at least good teaching, are set challenging targets and receive outstanding pastoral support to help them succeed. Students' current work suggests the trend of high attainment will continue. Students are committed to doing their best because of high expectations at Cranbrook and they are keen learners. In good and outstanding lessons, students are attentive and quickly learn new concepts. Students have an excellent rapport with staff, feel confident to ask questions and are highly articulate. They possess enquiring minds, drawing quickly on teachers' very good subject knowledge. They make at least good progress and many achieve outstandingly well because they are motivated by having to think for themselves. Students consistently receive good teaching and this, together with rigorous tracking of students' progress, ensures that nearly all students achieve equally well. The very few students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress and achieve as well as their peers. Students who speak English as an additional language make at least good progress, but not all planning uses different resources or teaching strategies to fully stretch their ability.

Provision for adopting healthy lifestyles is outstanding. Students relish sporting options available to all. The high participation rate, along with healthy options in the canteen, means that students have a good diet and levels of fitness. Students enjoy many roles and responsibilities as peer mentors, student listeners and take on leadership roles in clubs, such the as Amnesty group and the eco group, and in activities with primary school children. The school has an active student council which meets frequently. Ideas from the

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student council are supported by leaders but the council as the voice of the student body is not always used to evaluate the impact of the school policies.

Students have an excellent understanding of staying safe. They are attuned to issues such as cyber-bullying, youth crime and the need to be vigilant if using social networking sites. Students possess good spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding but their knowledge of different faiths and religions is lacking in breadth. Attendance is high and persistent absence is very rare, reflecting students' enjoyment of Cranbrook School.

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	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	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	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	2

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

How effective is the provision?

The overall quality of teaching is consistently good. Some teaching is outstanding, evident in history, ICT, chemistry, geography and English, where the quality of learning was high because of an energetic pace and well-planned pair and group tasks. The teacher's confident use of ICT in chemistry through use of a webcam ensured safety in modelling an experiment, and use of interactive learning resources in a mathematics lesson was effective in helping students with problem-solving. In good teaching, enquiry-based questioning elicits responses from students which go beyond description to interpretation and evaluation of concepts. Questioning is inclusive, with questions to less confident as well as more-able students. Students are adept at assessing their progress and that of their peers, although this is not embedded in all teaching. In the rare satisfactory lessons, teaching is over-reliant on teacher-talk, limiting students' independence as learners.

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Most students know their targets because of regular oral feedback and guidance after periodic assessments. In some subjects, such as history, marking is very good, with detailed information about what to improve and how. However, high quality marking is not evident in all subjects and students do not always receive guidance to take incremental steps to improve their work. A few parents and carers wish for even more regular guidance about how to help their children's learning.

The outstanding curriculum contributes to students' all-round development extremely well because of high levels of personalisation. Pathways at Key Stage 4 are largely traditional GCSE courses but well matched to students' ability and interests. The school's specialism in science has a profound impact upon all aspects of provision, increasing curricular choice, sustaining high attainment in the sciences and supporting much cross-curricular and sustainability work. The school observatory and solar system project used in teaching primary school children is exceptional. Many international field trips offer high quality learning about different cultures and languages.

The priority given to personal, social and health education permeates cross-curricular work. Themed weeks for sustainability, the arts, curious minds and mini-enterprise give fantastic opportunities to tackle contemporary issues and work as teams to solve practical projects. A diverse range of sport enjoyed by almost all students, reflects Cranbrook's passion for sporting excellence.

Cranbrook School has many strengths but a significant feature of its work is the outstanding care, guidance and support for students. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those with medical needs and/or physical disabilities are extremely well cared for and achieve as well as their peers. Staff training is sound and staff know how to cope should a medical emergency arise on school trips. The very few looked after children are well supported and the school maintains good communication with carers and the local authority. Links with external support agencies complement the excellent onsite medical centre. Students benefit from input from the police about substance misuse, and from external counselling professionals and other medical experts. Students receive good guidance for progressing from Year 11 to Year 12 and the Connexions service plays an active role in this work.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, along with her leadership teams, has sharpened quality assurance processes used to judge the quality of teaching and make staff more accountable for students' progress. Departmental improvement planning is more comprehensive and now

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integrated into a cycle of evaluation and review which measures the work of each department. The whole-school and department improvement plans are supporting the key areas for development across the school, such as better use of assessment and increased use of ICT, but success is not always measured against achievement of groups of students. The audit of the quality of teaching has been used judiciously by leaders to determine which departments need extra support to move teaching from good to outstanding. Recent staff training in the use of assessment, led by heads of department and informed by visits to outstanding schools, is helping to review how to better support all students. The impact of peer observation to experience what characterises outstanding teaching is gathering momentum.

Outstanding aspects of leadership and management are excellent partnership working which fully supports achievement and complements the excellent care at the school. High achievement of all student groups reflects outstanding equality of opportunity.

Governance, safeguarding of students and engagement with parents and carers are all good. Statutory requirements for child protection are met. Leaders ensure that very good risk assessments are in place for highly popular school trips. Most parents and carers feel that their children are safe.

The governing body is well versed in all school matters, sustaining a sharp focus on the strengths of the school, as well as monitoring the impact of increasingly robust departmental reviews. Governors are forthright in challenging leaders about standards of teaching and senior leaders are held to account for examination results.

The governing body does not systematically capture feedback and ideas from all stakeholders, staff, students and parents and carers, to inform strategic priorities.

Work to promote community cohesion is good. International links with India, Tanzania and overseas sports tours are firmly established. The expedition to Tanzania, running for over 25 years, gives unique opportunity for students to experience local communities. Students' understanding of different faiths, ethnicities and socio-economic contexts of other communities in England is less well developed.

Resources are deployed very effectively, leading to outstanding outcomes for students.

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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	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

The sixth form is outstanding. Leadership of the sixth form is tightly focused and energetic, driving changes to support better teaching and therefore better progress in some previously underperforming subjects at AS level. Students possess an intelligent work ethic, recognising that study skills acquired in Year 12 and 13 prepare them well for becoming undergraduate students, to which many aspire and often succeed in doing so.

Students enter the sixth form with a high proportion of passes at grade A or B at GCSE level, and many have straight A* or A passes. Students make at least good progress and by the time they leave the sixth form, their attainment is high. A very high proportion of students transfer from Year 12 into Year 13. The vast majority secure places at university. Students receive excellent guidance for university applications, although a few parents and carers suggested an imbalance of guidance for those applying to Oxford and Cambridge compared to other universities. Students who met with inspectors do not endorse this view. Leaders offer effective one-to-one support to all students for applications forms and interview preparation.

The curriculum offers a very good range of courses at AS and A level, catering well for sciences, arts and humanities. The partnership with the local secondary school enables a small minority of students to study vocational courses. Outstanding care, guidance and support in the lower school are mirrored in the sixth form and the welfare of students is diligently supported by leaders and house staff.

Sixth form students are exceptional ambassadors for Cranbrook School both in their conduct around the school and commitment to leading whole-school events. Student listeners, trained by Childline, offer excellent support to younger students. Their maturity in addressing concerns through a secure electronic portal is well honed and they know

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when and how to refer more demanding issues to appropriate staff. Such maturity is impressive.

The impact of the work of the two new heads of sixth form is emergent in ironing out some legacy issues in the progress of students in a few AS level courses and in raising expectations of all teaching staff. Overall therefore, the leadership and management of the sixth form are good.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Just over 10% of parents and carers returned questionnaires and most were positive about the education and welfare of their children at Cranbrook School. Several parents and carers wrote very positive comments about the rich curriculum and trips and activities which their children enjoy. A few parents and carers raised concern that the school does not always ask for or capture their views systematically to shape the direction of the school. Leaders and managers have begun to review how to build even better communication with parents and carers, but recognise that this requires more rapid change.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cranbrook 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 92 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 770 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	65	71	22	24	4	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	60	65	31	34	0	0	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	45	49	44	48	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	50	39	42	7	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	43	42	46	7	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	36	43	47	11	12	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	57	35	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)	50	54	24	26	11	12	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	47	51	35	38	7	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	45	39	42	4	4	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	29	51	55	9	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	53	58	31	34	5	5	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	62	29	32	4	4	1	1

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



11 July 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Cranbrook School, Cranbrook TN17 3 JD

This letter is to thank you for your very mature attitudes and help during the inspection. The inspection team enjoyed meeting with you, hearing your views and seeing your work in lessons. We have judged that Cranbrook School, including the sixth form, is an outstanding school. The following are key features which make your school outstanding.

- An outstanding curriculum, including enterprise and enrichment activities which meet your needs extremely well.
- Mostly good and occasionally outstanding teaching, leading to outstanding progress.
- Outstanding care, guidance and support that underpin your safety and pastoral care on a daily basis.
- The wealth of opportunities which you willingly take on board to make a contribution to your school community.
- Your outstanding behaviour in lessons and around the school which enables you to focus well in lessons and learn together.
- Your success in examinations at GCSE and in the sixth form, with standards significantly above those found nationally.

We have asked your headteacher to improve two features of the schools work:

- raise the proportion of teaching which is regularly outstanding
- ensure that all marking and feedback about your work is sufficiently detailed so that all students know how to improve their work.

You are excellent ambassadors for the school and you make a significant contribution to supporting the ethos and reputation of Cranbrook School.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Beckford-Hall

Her Majesty's Inspector

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