

Critchill School

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 123946 |
| Local Authority | Somerset |
| Inspection number | 359550 |
| Inspection dates | 11–12 July 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Sarah Mascall |

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 | 5–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 40 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Christie Birchby |
| Headteacher | Mark Armstrong |
| Date of previous school inspection | 7 November 2007 |
| School address | Nunney Road Frome BA11 4LB |
| Telephone number | 01373464148 |
| Fax number | 01373453481 |
| Email address | office@critchill.somerset.sch.uk |

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Age group | 5–16 |
| Inspection dates | 11–12 July 2011 |
| Inspection number | 359550 |

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited eight lessons or parts of lessons and observed six teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, and pupils and students. Pupils' and students' work, information on their progress, safeguarding policies and other documents were evaluated. Questionnaires from 14 parents and carers, 26 staff and 33 pupils and students were scrutinised.

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

- The effectiveness of the school's actions in raising standards, particularly in science, and in ensuring all pupils and students make the progress they should.
- Whether teachers are ensuring that pupils and students know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.
- The effectiveness of the governing body in monitoring the work of the school and challenging them to raise standards further.
- The effectiveness of the school's strategies in supporting pupils' and students' personal development and improving attendance.

Information about the school

Critchill is a smaller than average special school. It caters predominantly for pupils and students with severe and moderate learning needs. An increasing number have autistic spectrum disorders and/or additional needs associated with physical disabilities and medical conditions. A very small number of pupils and students have profound and multiple learning difficulties. All have a statement of special educational needs. The vast majority of pupils and students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils and students from minority ethnic backgrounds is very small, as is the percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language. At the time of the inspection, there were a very small number of pupils and students in the care of the local authority.

As part of its curriculum, the school runs its own breakfast club each morning.

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

1

Main findings

Critchill School is a good school that has improved, and continues to improve, at a very rapid rate. Since 2008, when the school was judged to be satisfactory, outstanding leadership by the headteacher and his senior team have ensured that all aspects of the school's provision is at least good, and in some areas it is excellent. Pupils and students now make good and, on occasions, excellent progress in their learning, benefiting from strong teaching and a good, and rapidly developing, curriculum.

Pupils and students are very enthusiastic about school, and this is reflected in their above-average attendance. They are well prepared for learning each morning through the breakfast club, which supports many aspects of their personal development and prompts them to use their good skills in literacy and numeracy. Behaviour is good and pupils say they feel safe in school. They respond well to staff, and the care, support and guidance for pupils and students is excellent. Guidance to support learning is good. While pupils and students have clear targets to help them improve, these are not always shared with pupils and students in a way that enables them to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, because of its very rigorous monitoring systems, the school had already recognised this as an area for concern and started to address this through consultations with staff.

The quality of teaching has improved considerably because of very effective monitoring and support. As a result, there are many strengths in teaching that are consistent in the vast majority of lessons. Planning is good and many activities are practical. Pupils and students comment on how much they enjoy learning because lessons are fun. A strength of teaching is the good match of work to the wide range of special needs within each class. Teaching assistants work very well with teachers, and support individuals and groups of pupils and students extremely well during lessons. Occasionally though, teachers do not provide assistants with enough guidance to enable them to effectively carry out their roles.

Over the last three years, the headteacher has established a high-quality staff team where morale is very high and there is a shared sense of purpose. The drive and ambition of the leadership team is shared by all and it is very clear that this is a school that is not prepared to accept second-best for its pupils and students. Self-evaluation is very good because it is based on excellent monitoring of pupils' and students' progress and other aspects of the school's provision. This in turn is used extremely well to ensure areas for development are well focused to bring about improvements. All of these factors, together with good support from the governing body, contribute to the school's excellent capacity for sustained improvement.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve systems for feeding back to pupils and students so that they have a clear understanding of what they are doing well and what their next steps in learning will be.
- Ensure that all teachers make best use of teaching assistants by ensuring they are well informed about their roles in supporting pupils' and students' learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

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 | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| Taking into account: | 2 |
| Pupils' attendance ¹ | 2 |
| 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?

Teachers' planning is detailed and reflects their very good understanding of the wide range of need within their classes. Lessons are well structured with a clear introduction followed by group work in which work is closely matched to their ability. Planning ensures that there is a good range of activities and most, though not all, teaching assistants are clear about their roles. This was evident in a number of lessons where staff had a very

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

positive impact on learning, such as when supporting pupils to understand measuring capacity in mathematics lesson and in practising role play in English to express emotion. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to ensure teaching assistants use the correct terminology and are clear about the outcomes for learning. Teacher-led sessions at the start of a lesson are often very good. This was best shown in a mathematics session for the youngest pupils in which they learnt to use the signs for 'more than' and 'less than'. The use of a hand puppet crocodile enabled pupils to understand how he ate the biggest number and the shape of his mouth was how you drew the sign. All pupils understood the concept and were keen to show off their skills. Very good use is made of technology and pupils and students are confident to use the smart boards. A range of resources supports pupils and students well in their communication skills and teachers are consistent in their use of picture exchange symbols (PECS) symbols where required.

The curriculum is much improved since the last inspection. A clear curriculum map has been established that outlines the focus for teaching in the long and medium term. There is considerable focus on meeting the needs of individuals and planning is based on ensuring all have a curriculum that is well matched to their individual needs. Enrichment days, and very good use of local schools and colleges as well as outside providers, are enabling the school to provide a rich, broad curriculum which pupils and students clearly value. The school is extending the range of accreditation available to pupils and students in the next academic year, reflecting staff's very high expectations of what pupils and students can achieve.

The care and welfare of pupils and students are at the heart of this school. Staff know pupils and students very well and show considerable care and concern for their needs. The tracking of pupils' and students' progress against their academic and personal and social targets is monitored very closely. As a result, pupils and students are making at least good progress academically and achieving very well in their personal development. The school has already started work on providing pupils and students with a better understanding of how well they are doing in their learning targets and helping them understand what it is they need to do to improve further. The very close work between staff and the wide range of agencies involved with pupils ensures that they are very well cared for. Systems to support those pupils and students who struggle to attend school regularly are very effective.

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 |

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's high expectations and a determination to make Critchill a successful school have enabled much to be achieved in a short period of time. He is extremely well supported by a very committed leadership team. Systems for monitoring all aspects of provision are of a very high quality and ensure that any indication of a drop in the quality of learning is addressed quickly and effectively. The impact of this very strong leadership and management has been that year on year the school has developed and improved. Teaching and learning are now good and there are examples of outstanding practice. There is a sense of vibrancy about the school, and staff are enthusiastic and committed to ensuring pupils and students make the best possible progress. They meet regularly to monitor pupils' and students' progress, and the use of very rigorous systems ensures that any dip in progress is identified and addressed. Systems for monitoring data are highly sophisticated and have ensured that pupils' and students' equality of opportunity is very well assured. There has been a marked improvement in pupils' progress, particularly over the last two years, because of the aspirational targets set by staff, and a number of pupils and students are making outstanding progress in aspects of their learning.

Governors are providing a good level of support and are extending their knowledge in analysing data in order to challenge the school even more. New structures have been introduced to improve liaison with staff so that governors have more first-hand knowledge of what goes on in school. They have good processes for working with staff but are keen to develop these further. The governing body is particularly vigilant about safeguarding arrangements and, at the time of the inspection, these were exemplary. The school has very good relationships with the vast majority of parents and carers. Parents and carers are very positive about the support they receive from staff and appreciate the contact they have with them. The school is determined to improve communication further, for example through providing more information through the use of the internet.

The school has successfully raised its profile within the community, and very good links with mainstream and other special schools have been established. This has had a very positive impact in terms of pupils' personal development as well as improving the range of opportunities for them. Good links have been established with a school in Zambia and the school is actively developing its community cohesion in terms of national links to provide pupils with a better understanding of life in a multicultural society.

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 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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 1 |
| 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

The return of the Ofsted questionnaire was broadly average as a percentage of pupils on roll. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the impact it has had on their children, particularly on how safe they feel their children are. Many make very positive comments about the staff and the progress their children have made. Their comments can be summarised by one parent who wrote, 'I cannot think of a better school for children with special needs. The staff are caring, helpful and very approachable. My child has blossomed since being here.' Another wrote, 'My son has only been at Critchill for a year and we have seen unbelievable progress in all aspects of his learning, speech and behaviour. He is so happy and so are we.' There were, however, differing comments about communication. One parent wrote that regarding 'any suggestions or requests I have made which I feel are specific for my child's needs, staff have acted immediately and bent over backwards to do even more than I have anticipated'. A small number, though, feel that communication is not always effective, with one parent commenting that 'communication between home and school is not always at its best'. The school and governors are in the process of reviewing their systems for communicating with parents and carers including establishing clearer guidelines on the use of home- school books.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Critchill 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 inspector received 14 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 40 pupils and students registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 10 | 71 | 4 | 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 10 | 71 | 4 | 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 9 | 64 | 4 | 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 9 | 64 | 3 | 21 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 11 | 79 | 2 | 14 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 6 | 64 | 3 | 21 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 7 | 50 | 7 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 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) | 7 | 50 | 6 | 43 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 8 | 57 | 5 | 36 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 8 | 57 | 5 | 36 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 8 | 57 | 4 | 29 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 7 | 50 | 6 | 43 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 10 | 71 | 4 | 29 | 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 | 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.



13 July 2011

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Critchill School, Frome BA11 4LB

Thank you so much for being so friendly and helpful when I came to visit your school recently. I very much enjoyed meeting you all, and a special thank you to those of you who gave up your time to talk to me. I enjoyed hearing about how much you liked school and all the different things you could do.

I think your school is a good school. You work hard in lessons and, because of this, you do well in your learning. It was good to see how happy you are in school and that you feel safe. I was very impressed with the way you behaved in breakfast club and how you used your maths skills to work out how much things cost. The school is very good at making sure you are well cared for. You clearly know a lot about keeping healthy and it was good to hear how much you enjoy all the different sports and activities. Your teachers know you well and help you learn a lot of things.

The school is very well led by the headteacher, and all the staff work hard to make sure you do well. Because the school wants to be even better, I have asked them to make sure that teachers make sure you know how well you are doing and what you need to do, to do even better. I have also asked the school to make sure that all the staff who help you in lessons are clear about what they have to do so that they can make sure you make the best possible progress.

I wish you well for the future and hope all of you continue with all your hard work.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Mascall Additional Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.