

Cromwell High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106279
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	377388
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Eric Craven

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	66
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Albert Hatton
Headteacher	Andrew Foord
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2009
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Age group	11–16
Inspection date(s)	03–04 October 2011
Inspection number	377388

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Twelve lessons and 10 teachers were observed. Meetings were held with staff, school council representatives, a member of the governing body and a parent. A telephone conversation was held with the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at data about the progress pupils make as well as their attendance and behaviour. They looked at the school's monitoring and evaluation records, minutes of meetings of the governing body and teachers' planning. The 29 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were scrutinised along with the 45 from students and 31 from staff.

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

- The school's effectiveness in tackling underachievement in English in 2009/10.
- The impact of the recently-expanded senior leadership team.
- How senior staff are improving the quality of teaching.

Information about the school

Cromwell High School provides for students with severe learning difficulties and other associated difficulties. Around a fifth have profound and multiple learning difficulties and about two in five have autistic spectrum disorder. The school is located in adjoining buildings to Astley Sports College. The students come from throughout the borough of Tameside and about two thirds are transported to school by the local authority, with the others transported by their parents and carers. All have a statement of special educational needs and seven are looked after by the local authority. About a quarter of the students are girls. A very large majority are of White British heritage with the other students coming from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A little over two-thirds are known to be eligible for free school meals, a much higher than average proportion. The school has achieved a series of awards including the National Healthy School status, the International School Award, the BECTA information and communication technology (ICT) Mark and the Award for Connexions Excellence.

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

Cromwell High School provides its students with a good education overall and some aspects of the school's provision are even better than this. Parents and carers who returned the Ofsted questionnaire are very largely positive about the school's work and the positive difference it makes to their children's lives. The care, guidance and support provided by staff are outstanding and one parent captures the sentiments of many in saying, 'Staff in the school are amazing and have made a huge difference to my son's education and independence.' The school works exceptionally well with parents and carers, its partners from other schools and associated agencies. This work makes a tangibly positive difference to students, parents and carers. A good example is how the students from the co-located high school act as peer mentors to help Cromwell students express their views on the school's questionnaire for students.

Because of their considerable special educational needs and/or disabilities students' overall attainment is unlikely to rise above low. Nevertheless, because of good teaching and an exciting and relevant curriculum they make good progress in their learning. Teaching is consistently good but only a small proportion is outstanding. Overall, students' behaviour is excellent. Challenges posed by students are generally infrequent and invariably caused by the frustrations of communication difficulties. The well-trained members of staff deal with these challenges consistently effectively and as a consequence, those students who display these rare episodes tend to make rapid progress in managing their own behaviour. Students learn about the needs of others and their social skills develop extremely well. This contributes greatly to their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Students' attendance is broadly average. There is a handful of students with very low rates of attendance, often but not always, caused by substantial medical absences. Students who are mobile engage in a good deal of physical activity and well-focused guidance means many students live healthier lives. Parents, carers, staff and students who completed the questionnaires unanimously agree that students feel exceptionally safe. In part, this is because of the robustness of the school's good safeguarding arrangements. Wherever they can, students make a good contribution to the school and wider community. Fund-raising for others in need is a high priority and all students play their part. The school has begun to help students provide feedback to staff on how much they have learned in lessons. However, this work is

not yet reaping rewards with all groups of students as staff wrestle with how to best gain feedback from those with the most significant communication difficulties.

The school is led and managed well by an experienced headteacher and a relatively new and expanded senior staff team. New members of the senior team have taken on delegated responsibilities with enthusiasm and no little skill. The school monitors and evaluates its performance extremely well. The governing body is making a good contribution in holding the school to account by questioning the information it is given, linking members to various areas of the school's work to get a fuller view and in contributing to the planning of the school's next steps. Students are treated equally and staff are particularly vigilant to ensure no student misses out. Senior staff have an accurate view of the school because of the good-quality data they gather as part of their systematic evaluations. The school has tackled the areas for improvement from its last inspection with some success and has a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further so that more of it is outstanding by:
 - building on the work begun to gain the views of students of all abilities on how well they feel they are doing and then use this information to guide the planning of subsequent lessons
 - ensuring that objectives set in all lesson plans are consistently sharp, measurable and clearly understood by students.
- Improve attendance by liaising with other agencies and the local authority to ensure that support is provided for those families who are experiencing significant challenges in getting their children to school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of students

2

The vast majority of students enjoy coming to this school and feel very safe because of good relationships with staff and because they find the things they are taught to be interesting and relevant. A member of the school council reflected students' views well when he said, 'I feel very safe because they look after us and care for us.... they always help'. Many of the students reflect well on their learning about healthy lifestyles and those who are able eagerly take part in physical activities. They are proud of their school and willingly participate in the life of the school with more-able students playing a part in planning events. The school council also helpfully made a suggestion that changed the way lunches were served. The school is developing links with a school in Gambia and this is being used extremely well to help students' cultural awareness. They develop good knowledge and skills that will serve them well when they leave school. This is aided by the many opportunities they have to choose, share, take turns, interact with different groups of people, practise life skills and generally experience the world beyond school. Their excellent behaviour and social skills also make a substantial contribution in readying them well for life beyond school. Nevertheless, the preparedness of some students for the future is hampered by their low rates of attendance. Students learn to co-operate and think about

others’ needs. They make good progress overall in developing their literacy and numeracy. The school’s records show that the dip in students’ progress in English in 2009/10 has been dealt with effectively and the rate of progress has increased. The school’s analyses of data on the progress of students show that no particular groups of students are under-performing. Those with the most pronounced needs also make good progress relative to their starting points.

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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop [workplace and other skills]/[skills] that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

A telling aspect of the consistently good teaching is the very well-prepared plans for every lesson that set out what different groups of students are expected to achieve. However, very occasionally the objectives in the plans are not as crisp and measurable as they might be and not always expressed to students in ways they fully understand. Teachers assess students’ performance regularly to put themselves in a good position to set work at the correct level and they are beginning to seek students’ views on their learning to further help match work to their needs. Excellent relationships and the use of praise help students learn and most students show they can concentrate, remain on task and make contributions. Teaching assistants play their full part in helping students learn and their harmonious work with teachers is helped by their involvement in planning lessons. Students’ individual education plans are impressive working documents that are kept simple and manageable.

The curriculum meets the significant range of students’ needs exceptionally well. At Key Stage 3, a thematic approach around the ‘physical world’ and ‘social world’ helps give a relevance to students. At Key Stage 4, the focus appropriately moves to vocational learning and skills for the next stages in students’ lives. All subjects have some form of external accreditation to help students recognise and celebrate their achievements. It is creditable that all those who left school in 2011 moved on to

¹The 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.

further education. The curriculum is augmented outstandingly well by a wide variety of visitors and educational visits including residential experiences.

There are excellent transition arrangements that prepare students well before joining the school, as they move classes and when they eventually leave. The giving of intimate care is extremely well managed and monitored. There are good examples of significant improvements in individual students' attendance because of the efforts of the school to broker the help of others and to support parents and carers in need. However, there is also a small number of examples of students not attending frequently enough because transport has been stopped as a result of their challenging behaviours.

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 senior staff team works effectively together and is discharging its responsibilities well. Subject co-ordinators are increasingly evaluating their own subject's performance and driving its development. Staff are clear about their roles and the priorities the school has set. Virtually all who returned the questionnaire say they are proud to be a member of staff and they all they said they know what the school is trying to achieve. A small number feels the school does not make appropriate provision for professional development. The school development plan maps out the school's priorities well and extensive data and the views of those involved in the school are used to help set priorities. The governing body plays its part well with a good example being its consideration of discussion papers from the headteacher. Lesson monitoring has improved the quality of teaching and learning but more work is needed to move a larger proportion of teaching to an outstanding quality.

The school works exceptionally well with parents and carers. Communication is regular and informative, not least through the daily home-school books. The school's partnership with other professionals is equally impressive and there are striking examples of how individual students and their families have been helped and also how the school has helped others through the training it has provided. The school is working particularly effectively with the local authority's behaviour support team and with health professionals to ensure their resources are well-targeted. The school actively and very successfully promotes inclusion and tolerance, and is aided in this respect by its shared location with a mainstream high school. Staff promote equal opportunities well and are very watchful of any discrimination. They have established good arrangements to keep students safe and to monitor this is happening. The school's work in promoting community cohesion is good and especially so within the school itself. Learning about other cultures and links with different religions help the students appreciate these differences and in school they live and learn well together.

These are the grades for the 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	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	2

Views of parents and carers

Around 44% of parents and carers returned the Ofsted questionnaire. Their responses show that unanimously they are happy with their children's overall experience at the school and almost all aspects of the school's work. A very small number of responses disagree with a few of the statements and three do not feel the school takes account of their suggestions or concerns. Inspectors looked at the way the senior staff seek the views of parents and carers through the school's own questionnaire and through informal feedback from parents' groups and found examples of parents and carers influencing what happens at school. All parents and carers felt that their children enjoy the school and are kept safe. The school's own surveys of parents and carers reflect a similarly supportive and positive view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Cromwell 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 29 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 66 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	55	12	41	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	45	15	52	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	12	41	15	52	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	34	16	55	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	12	41	14	48	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	41	12	41	2	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	34	18	62	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)	11	38	13	45	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	34	16	55	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	34	15	52	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	38	13	45	2	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	12	41	14	48	1	3	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	48	14	48	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



5 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Cromwell High School, Dukinfield, SK16 5BJ

The inspectors were very pleased to meet you when we inspected your school. Thank you to the school councillors for telling us what you think about the school.

We think Cromwell is a good school and we found some things it does are excellent. The very best things are that you all feel very safe and you learn a great deal about how to get on with others and about differences between people. Your behaviour is extremely good and some students quickly learn to control their behaviour once they start at the school. The things you are taught are really interesting and very helpful to you. The way the staff look after you is brilliant and you tell us you think that as well. We were pleased to see that the school works very closely with your parents and carers and with other people to help you learn. It is also nice to see you doing jobs around the school and raising money for charities and also learning to be as healthy as you can. The teaching is good and the headteacher and other senior staff are good at managing the school. Because of all these things we think you make good progress in your learning.

There are a couple of things we have asked the school to do. Firstly, we have asked staff to make their teaching even better than good so that you can learn even more. Secondly, we have asked the headteacher to talk to other people and work out plans to help some students come to school more often than they do now.

Do keep working as hard as you do and you will continue to make your parents and carers very proud.

You have my best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Craven
Lead Inspector

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