

Cruckton Hall School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

This independent residential special school and children's home is for boys aged from 8 to 19. It is located on two sites. It admits students who have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder and associated conditions. Many students also have other diagnoses of special educational needs such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and social, sensory or communication difficulties. As a result, students display associated behaviours. All students have a statement of special educational needs and they often have had disrupted educational backgrounds. There are 82 students currently on the school roll. The school opened in 1981.

Most students are taught on the main school site, although post-16 students live on the other site and attend local colleges with support from the school. Altogether, 36 local authorities fund students currently on roll. The school aims 'to provide a warm, structured and caring learning environment in which each boy feels safe, feels secure, can succeed, is treated as an individual and can develop his skills and talents so that he leaves the school as an active participant in, and a positive contributor to society.'

The school's education provision was last inspected as a 'light touch' inspection in November 2008 and the boarding provision in November 2011.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education is good and all of the regulations for independent schools are met. The school is successful in meeting its aims of developing students so that they leave the school better equipped to be an active participant in society. As a result of the good teaching and assessment, students increasingly become re-engaged in their education, make good progress overall and develop personal and social skills extremely well. The school uses a range of highly skilled inter-disciplinary staff effectively, including therapists and those who work in the boarding provision, so that all areas of students' development are targeted in a coordinated and cohesive way. Since the previous inspection, the school has tackled the one area for improvement effectively. Arrangements for safeguarding are robust and rigorous.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. It meets all requirements and links aspects of care, education and therapy extremely effectively to support students' 24-hour learning. In Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 it is based on the National Curriculum. There is a strong emphasis on developing students' social and personal skills and re-engaging them in education, by enabling them to more effectively manage their own behaviour. As a result, students make good progress overall, although some make outstanding progress in their learning and personal development. Particularly strong progress is made in developing students' readiness to learn and participate in lessons and in their ability to work with others. Several examples were seen of students working together and supporting each other well in lessons and around the site. Staff know students extremely well and plans to meet their needs are very effective. In all key stages, there is a wide range of enrichment opportunities available, including forest school activities, regular visits to stables, canoeing, fishing and a variety of residential experiences in England, Scotland and Wales. This helps students to develop knowledge, skills and understanding in an integrated, meaningful and coherent manner and in a way in which they would not otherwise have access. Students are able to gain a wide variety of accreditations at levels appropriate to their needs. These include: GCSEs; European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL); Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALAN); Duke of Edinburgh's Award; and AQA units. In post-16, the curriculum is delivered in partnership with mainstream colleges and encompasses a wide range of courses up to and including A-Levels for students for whom it is appropriate. Work experience is provided, both within and outside the school for students as their needs allow.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and some teaching is outstanding. Throughout the school the better teaching results in outstanding progress in those lessons where the planned activities are suitably matched to the levels and needs of all students. However, this is not consistent and in a small minority of lessons, the tasks for students are not sufficiently varied to meet the levels at which the students are working. In these lessons, the different abilities of students are met through the level of support provided or the outcomes of the work they produce. The school knows where the best teaching occurs, and is using this information increasingly effectively, to disseminate best practice. In lessons observed, support staff worked extremely well with students to contribute well to their learning and development. Teachers consistently reinforce previous learning and link current learning with what is to be learnt next.

Plans for individual students cover a wide range of aspects of their development, including behaviour, academic progress and other areas where they need support, through various therapies. Provision and outcomes are closely monitored by staff who continually assess the progress students are making against their targets. There is good collaborative working between the boarding and school provision, so that targets are worked towards, both during the school day and during students' time in the residence and at other times of the day. Strong procedures are in place for the handover of students at the start and the end of the day. This allows a continuity of

approach which benefits the students as staff are made aware of any particular circumstances around the students' experiences.

The school's systems for monitoring academic progress over time are being developed. Academic assessment data is collated three times a year and the progress of individuals is monitored well. However, it is not clear to see how much progress is made overall when taking in to account the contextual factors of personal and social development. Progress towards personal and social targets is largely measured through targets within individual education plans (IEP). However, due to the complexity of the students' needs, the school has found it difficult to benchmark this data against nationally moderated data. The school has monitored the progress of different groups of students and found no significant patterns or trends. In the primary department, a commercial system is being used to monitor the progress of the pupils, although this is in its early days.

Students make good progress in their learning. Challenging targets are set by class teachers after initial assessments on entry to the school and are then updated termly. Generally, students meet, or exceed, the targets set for them. Case studies provided by the school show that progress made by individual students in areas of personal and social development is at least good. Individuals' personal development is monitored closely, and discussed regularly by staff.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school works hard to encourage students to be more independent and to develop an understanding of the consequences of their behaviour. Students generally enjoy their learning, as teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers use their knowledge of students' interests to engage them and support their learning well. As a result, students rapidly improve their attitudes to learning and work. The school nurtures students outstandingly well, so that those who initially have extremely negative attitudes to school often enjoy their time in school once they have settled in to the routines. This is shown by the high level of attendance across the school. Students often show remarkable improvements in their sociability and confidence as observed in several lessons when students were happy to work together to develop their learning.

Students' behaviour is good and although some students choose to remove themselves from lessons if they are feeling anxious, this does not impact negatively on the learning of others. It is a good example of students learning to manage their own behaviour. Examples were seen in lessons of students keen to share their interests and knowledge with others. This was particularly evident in an English lesson on science fiction, where one boy was very keen to share his knowledge of the Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy and another with encouragement was keen to discuss the merits of Star Wars. Although students enter school with extremely challenging behaviour, they soon learn to work within the clearly established routines and strategies which encourage positive behaviour. Staff are very skilful at following

the highly individualised plans which are devised around the students, so that any initial signs of discontent are identified and their behaviours de-escalated before learning is lost. Parents and carers also largely agree that improvements in behaviour are clearly evident in their child.

Students have very positive views about how the school has supported them in their time there. Some students were able to talk about how they were now being supported to manage their needs and control their behaviour more independently, through an array of therapies. The therapists, and other professionals, include; a music therapist, the school nurse, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and an educational psychologist, among others. Students develop an understanding of the wider community extremely well through specifically taught work on equality and diversity and through visits into the community. Such experiences help students gain an appreciation and respect for diversity that promotes tolerance and harmony and enables them to become more positive members of the school community.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. All of the required health and safety policies, including guidance for child protection, are in place and are implemented extremely well. Policies are robust, comprehensive and clear, and provide all of the necessary guidance for staff. The school's behaviour policy is effectively implemented, so that it is instrumental in bringing about significant improvements in behaviour.

Appropriate reference is made within the e-safety policy to the use and abuse of new technologies, including social networking sites, and cyber-bullying. Individual plans are very well devised, consistently applied by all staff, and meet the needs of all students extremely effectively. Robust risk assessments are in place and they accurately identify any risks associated with students, external visits or classroom activities. Procedures to ensure that the premises and accommodation are safe are also robust. Staff meet every day to discuss any issues which have arisen. Students are closely monitored to identify any problems so that they can be quickly rectified and there is a continual flow of information between staff, including managers and therapists, to ensure prompt action if required.

A large majority of students, who responded to questionnaires or were involved in discussions with the inspector, confirmed that they feel safe in the school. The school has clear procedures in place should bullying occur and these are followed robustly. The school runs an annual anti-bullying week. Students lead healthy lifestyles. They participate in a wide range of sporting and physical activities that keep them fit and ensure that they get enough exercise.

The school carries out frequent checks on portable electrical appliances to ensure equipment is in good condition. Very good attention is paid to fire safety, with regular fire drills and evacuations in place. All staff, including the designated person

for child protection, have been trained at the appropriate level. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All of the required checks on staff and others are carried out and are recorded appropriately in the single central register. All requirements are met.

Premises and accommodation at the school

There is a high standard of facilities and accommodation which enable students to learn safely and effectively. Classrooms are of an adequate size and there are subject specific teaching areas. There is plenty of space for outdoor recreation and sporting activities. There is also a good range of additional facilities which meet students' particular needs.

Provision of information

The school's prospectus provides parents, carers and others with all of the required information. It is clear, accurate, detailed and up-to-date. Parents and carers are provided with suitable annual reports about the attainment and progress made by their children.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints procedures meet regulatory requirements. The school was able to provide robust evidence that when complaints are received the procedures are followed correctly.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations')

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Develop more consistency in how well teachers plan for different activities for students' different learning styles.
- Refine data collection systems, so that the data available shows how different aspects of students' development impact on each other, so that an evaluation can be made for the overall progress of each child.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Independent special		
Date school opened	1981		
Age range of pupils	9–19 years		
Gender of pupils	Boys		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 83	Girls: 0	Total: 83
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of boarders	Boys: 73	Girls: 0	Total: 73
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 83	Girls: 0	Total: 83
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 17	Girls: 0	Total: 17
Annual fees (day pupils)	£99,750		
Annual fees (boarders)	£183,150		
Headteacher	Paul Mayhew		
Proprietor	Margaret Hill		

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.



15 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of URN 123619

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school this week. I really enjoyed meeting and talking to you and seeing you working in your lessons.

I found that your school is good overall, but there are some areas which are outstanding. Your teachers and other staff know you very well and plan lessons which help you to make good progress in your subjects and in your personal and social developments. The curriculum that you have meets your needs outstandingly well to support your learning.

The school looks after you exceptionally well. You feel safe and most of you say that you enjoy school and you have been helped to manage your own behaviour better than before. You are given a lot of opportunities to participate in activities and lessons that you enjoy. I was particularly impressed by the way that you were so engaged in your learning in all your lessons and about how your behaviour improves in the school because of the support you receive.

I have asked the school to improve in two areas: how they assess your progress in all areas of your development and to provide you with more variety of tasks in lessons, according to your needs. This will enable them to support you even more effectively.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the best for your futures, both in the school and in your lives when you leave.

Yours sincerely

David Muir
Her Majesty's Inspector