

Crofton School

Marks Road, Stubbington, Fareham, Hampshire, PO14 2AT

Inspection dates 13–14 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of students		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of students		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and students

This is a good school

- Students' achievement is good and improving. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make particularly good progress, as do the small number of students in The Croft a resourced provision for autism.
- There has been good and rapid progress by most groups of Year 10 and 11 students since September 2013.
- The newly appointed headteacher is a strong leader who has high expectations of teachers.
- Teaching is good overall and there is some that is outstanding, particularly in English, geography, mathematics, dance, physical education (PE) and design and technology.
- The teaching of reading, writing, speaking and numeracy across all subjects enables all students to make good progress over time.
- Students enjoy school. They behave consistently well and interact confidently with one another. Students feel safe, secure and happy in school.
- Exclusions for misbehaviour are low and numbers have dropped significantly since September 2013.
- The capability of the school to improve has been strengthened by the appointment of a larger senior leadership team. It gives the headteacher strong support in driving behaviour, achievement and teaching to the highest standards.
- Governors check how well leaders and teachers meet their targets very carefully. They act swiftly to tackle any weaknesses. Governors know a lot about the school and its strengths and areas for improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of marking is not consistent across all subjects. It does not always provide students, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9, with an understanding of what they need to do to improve.
- A few subject leaders do not use evidence from classroom observations to set accurate or effective targets to improve teaching and learning. This is particularly true in science.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 40 lessons; five were observed together with the leadership team.
- Inspectors visited an assembly and tutor time to find out how well the personal needs of individual students are met. Student planners were examined in five classes to check how consistently homework is set across year groups and subjects.
- An inspector listened to students reading out loud.
- Inspectors also carried out observations of three shorter lessons to check on progress over this school year for those students who need extra help to catch up.
- Inspectors examined students' files and exercise books to check the quality of marking and the help offered to students to improve their work in English, mathematics, science and religious education.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair and four other members of the Governing Body and a variety of other leaders and groups of staff. Inspectors had telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority and with a representative of Fareham College.
- Inspectors spoke with four groups of students in meetings and also informally in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors took account of 87 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View), one letter from a parent, and a parental survey which had been carried out by the school governors.
- There were 39 staff questionnaires returned and considered by the inspection team.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including examples of students' work, the school's own information on students' attainment and progress, and records of attendance and behaviour. They also checked minutes of governor meetings, safeguarding logs, school planning documents and records of classroom observations by school leaders. They also looked carefully at the school's current data on students' achievement.

Inspection team

Sheila Crew, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Richard Butler	Additional inspector
Roger Garrett	Additional inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Crofton School is larger than the average-sized secondary school. It has Enhanced Healthy School Status and the Investor in People award.
- Most students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The school is over-subscribed and the number on roll has increased slightly since the last inspection.
- The proportion of students supported by additional funding provided for looked-after children and students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The school has a high number of children from service families and also receives extra money from the service premium fund.
- The school has a 12-place local authority-funded centre, The Croft, for students with specific Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) learning difficulties.
- The proportion of disabled students, and those who have special educational needs with statements or supported through school action plus, is below average. The proportion of students at school action is average when compared nationally.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2013, having spent the previous six years as the deputy headteacher.
- Apart from the deputy headteacher and one assistant headteacher, the senior leadership team has been changed this year. There are two new acting assistant headteachers plus one new assistant headteacher who has responsibility for teaching and learning.
- In February, 2014 the school received a letter of commendation from the Secretary of State for Education congratulating it on the improvement in GCSE results from 2011 to 2013. It states that this places the school as one of the 100 most improved schools in England and Wales.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 attend off-site courses at Fareham College.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise the levels of progress and achievement of all students by:
 - ensuring that in every lesson marking consistently provides students with an understanding of what they need to do to improve their work
 - allowing students opportunities to act on the feedback they are given
 - reviewing students' targets more regularly in Key Stage 3, to ensure that all groups make consistently good and rapid progress, especially middle-ability students.
- Strengthen the quality of leadership further by:
 - improving subject leadership in science so that all students are set appropriate and challenging targets
 - developing all subject leaders' ability to use evidence from classroom observations more accurately to improve teaching and the progress of students in their subject areas.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of students is good

- Students enter the school with attainment that is above average expectations for their age. By the time they leave Year 11 the proportion gaining five A* to C grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics, has been consistently above the national average over the past three years. Scrutiny of students' work shows that the quality of achievement in the school is good for most groups of students at Key Stage 4.
- Most students achieve expected progress for their age at GCSE across many subjects, including mathematics, and they do particularly well in English, humanities and modern foreign languages. There has been some variability in progress in some subjects and students have underachieved, particularly in religious education and some sciences. Since September 2013, school leaders have taken swift action to eradicate this underachievement by changes in staffing, precisely targeted support for some students, and more rigorous checking of individual students' progress.
- The most able students do particularly well in GCSE chemistry, English, English literature, French, history, physics and statistics.
- In 2013, the proportion of students who made more than the progress expected for their age fell below national expectations, particularly for middle-ability and less able students. There is a renewed focus in Year 11 on progress for the less able and middle-ability students and more rigorous tracking of their achievement in this academic year.
- The school has ensured that those students who are disabled or have special educational needs are making good and rapid progress. Students who are referred to the school's specialist provision, The Croft, are provided with support in mainstream classes as well as individualised programmes in the unit. Progress for this group of students in lessons observed by inspectors was very good.
- This year, governors have approved the use of the additional funding from the government to buy in more staffing in English and mathematics. This extra money has been spent well to support students who need help to catch up in lessons, and their progress has improved in the current school year. In the last three years there has been a widening gap in achievement for this group when compared to the main body of students and they have been three-quarters of a GCSE grade below. School data shows that this gap is narrowing significantly now and they are in line to make substantially better progress this year.
- The school used to enter some students early for GCSE mathematics in the summer term of Year 10. This year they have reviewed this policy because it led to underachievement, so it has been stopped.
- Year 10 and 11 students who attend off-site courses at Fareham College achieve high pass rates. These include 17 students studying Level 1 qualifications in construction, hair and beauty, engineering and motor vehicles. Three students are studying a Level 2 photography BTEC. Their progress is closely monitored by both the school and the college. Reports on their progress are produced every term.
- The school helps students to develop good basic skills in reading, writing, speaking and numeracy. There are regular opportunities for students to read simply for pleasure in the school day as part of the Learning Resource Centre's (LRC) range of programmes. This also includes an accelerated reading programme for reluctant readers. In discussions, students who had received some extra help with reading were very positive about how their reading was improving and were confident about reading aloud.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. It engages and challenges students across all ability ranges. This is because staff know their students well and they use their checks on students' progress with confidence to plan lessons which interest them and match their abilities.

In the few cases where teachers do not plan or know students so well, for instance where there are supply teachers, the learning is less precisely planned and delivered.

- Where teaching is strong, teachers check how well students understand and make progress in their skills and knowledge. They make adjustments to increase or decrease the pace of lessons to take account of how well students are learning.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They know what students already understand and use this knowledge to plan demanding and interesting work, to which students respond enthusiastically. For example, in a geography lesson, students were highly engaged in a research task on Kenya because the teacher provided a range of stimulating resources which enabled students to locate and study information. Students were enthusiastic in exchanging ideas on the impact of tourism on the economy.
- Where teaching is outstanding, teachers have high expectations. In these lessons, activities are well sequenced and imaginative and stimulate students' curiosity. Teaching strategies are adapted to stimulate learning, for example in textiles; the teacher uses well-focused and challenging question-and-answer sessions that help students explore new ideas.
- The effective use of teaching assistants and Student Progress Support Assistants (SPSA) to support students on an individual basis in lessons is very good, particularly for disabled students and those with special educational needs, for whom the learning is carefully planned. For example, in one English literature lesson the teaching assistant had been involved in planning a lesson focused on a character's feelings of isolation, while supporting a student with autism who had problems with emotions, and he was well prepared to join in discussions.
- Occasionally teachers' expectations are not high enough and the level of challenge is not appropriate for students, particularly in science and religious education. In these subjects the number of higher-ability students achieving A* or A grades at GCSE is not yet high enough. As a result, students make some progress, but they could achieve more.
- Teachers provide helpful comments in their marking in some subjects, particularly in English, and students show that they understand how to improve. However, this is not always applied consistently across the whole school. School leaders recognise that high quality marking needs to be consistent in every subject.
- Teaching at its best is evident in the positive relationships between teachers and students which enable students to contribute effectively to the lesson. In physical education lessons, teachers provided a good climate for learning where students made excellent progress in their acquisition of skills. They were whole-heartedly engaged as a result of well-planned and dynamic teaching.
- There is strong evidence to show that some students who struggle with reading and writing in Year 7 have been moved on through good and effective teaching. Teachers make good use of key words and appropriate language in a range of subjects, including history, where students were confident in writing about their views on slavery and colonialism.

The behaviour and safety of students are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students and staff share a strong sense of belonging to a community. Students say they value the range of enrichment activities which are available, like the orchestra, charities week, visits to local and national places of interest and overseas trips, such as the battlefields in Ypres and fund-raising for a school in Ghana.
- The majority of students get on well with each other. Students have good manners and behave well in most lessons. They are courteous and welcoming to staff and visitors. Students commented that this is a happy school because of the positive relationship that exists between themselves and between students and staff.
- Attitudes to learning are good and students are well supported. This is particularly true for students in The Croft, who have individualised programmes, like Life Skills training, which help them to integrate with mainstream classes and develop confidence in relating to one another.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is very good. Students enjoy school, feel safe and say that staff respect them. They understand risks and know the school rules about

how to stay safe; for example, when riding bikes to and from school it is obligatory to wear cycle helmets. Students say they are given detention if they fail to wear them.

- Students have good awareness of the different types of bullying, including homophobic and racist. They are confident that staff deal effectively with any incidents that occur. Although a small minority of parents and carers expressed some reservations about bullying and how it is managed, the overwhelming majority considered that it is good.
- A unique feature of the school's pastoral system is the use of Year 9 students who visit Year 6 pupils as part of the transition programme and then stay with students throughout their first year in the school as Year 7 mentors. Year 7 tutors have close links with primary schools and there is a strong focus on supporting students in the transition process.
- Good behaviour is reflected in the high attendance figures for all students, which are above average. The school's decisive action in creating a seclusion unit has ensured a rapid decline in the rate of fixed-term exclusions. Governors have approved the use of additional funding to appoint staff who have specific responsibilities to improve attendance for those students who are looked-after children or are entitled to free school meals.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership is good because, since his appointment in September 2013, the headteacher has taken decisive and successful action to move the school forward. This has included restructuring the senior leadership team and recruiting additional leaders to help the school to focus on improving achievement and teaching. The headteacher's focus on eliminating weaker teaching has led to a number of new teaching and subject leader appointments to replace staff who have left.
- The headteacher is aware that vacancies in leadership posts for science and special educational needs are having an impact on progress for some students. He has taken steps to ensure staff are supported in these areas.
- The school has an accurate view of its own performance and leaders are determined to move towards outstanding overall effectiveness. Senior leaders carry out systematic lesson observations and conduct 'drop-ins' on a regular basis. Teachers are given written feedback and a range of targets hold them to account. Records show that the proportion of good or outstanding lessons is high, with improvements across subject departments and good lesson planning. The quality of teachers' work is linked to pay progression and to Teachers' Standards.
- The headteacher has been instrumental in driving systems to raise teaching to the highest standards. Senior leaders conduct a 'coaching' programme of support for subject leaders in science to improve the quality of teaching and the progress of students.. The subject leader for RE is new and receives support as part of an induction programme.
- Most subject leaders are dedicated to improving teaching and learning and they aspire to reach outstanding standards. They have implemented new policies which have speeded up the pace of improvements in teaching and learning. However, not all such leaders have put policies fully in place, for example the school's marking policy. Senior leaders are aware of the need to improve this so that marking consistently provides students with an understanding of what they need to do to improve their work in all subjects. This area for improvement is particularly important in the marking of Key Stage 3 students' work.
- The school provides a good range of subjects in the curriculum. There is a keen focus on academic achievement which is expanded by the provision of an enrichment programme that includes child development, citizenship and personal development programmes. There are a number of vocational courses offered to Key Stage 4 students, including construction, hair and beauty, engineering and motor vehicle maintenance at the local college. The school is aware that the number of subjects taken by the most able students at GCSE is low by comparison with national averages.
- There is an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities to students which includes overseas trips linked to modern foreign languages. There is also a well-attended homework club which

runs after school on Mondays to Thursdays.

- The school receives services from the local authority through the annual visit of a Leading Learning Partner (LLP) to monitor progress. He was consulted by governors on the appointment of the headteacher. The LLP report in 2013 report has provided a very clear outline of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This included the recommendation that the school increase the number of GCSE subjects taken by the most able students in order to present them with the right degree of stretch and challenge. The local authority regards the school as good and has an appropriate 'light-touch' approach.
- The provision for students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is good. There is some good practice where students demonstrate a clear understanding of right and wrong. Students are given opportunities to reflect on social issues, such as the importance of teamwork and achieving personal goals. They discuss moral dilemmas about issues such as poverty and religious prejudice in drama, religious education and English as well as during tutor sessions and assemblies. Senior leaders encourage all students take up the many cultural opportunities to join in after-school clubs and school trips.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire said they were very pleased with the way the school is led and would recommend it to others. A minority are concerned about the way the school communicates with them, especially the effectiveness of the school's responses to parental concerns.
- Staff questionnaire responses indicate that the majority believe the school to be well led, although they express concerns regarding the provision of professional development for support staff. The vast majority of staff are positive and one teacher commented, 'I have been teaching for over 30 years and this is one of the happiest schools I've worked in. All of my colleagues are committed to raising student achievement and enriching their lives.'
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the last inspection the governing body has fully supported the school and was fully involved in the appointment of the headteacher. Governors set the headteacher's performance targets based on aspirational targets in the School Improvement Plan (SIP). They hold the headteacher to account with regard to the accuracy of predictions for students' achievement, examination results, the quality of teaching and attendance. Governors have a good understanding of data on how well the school is performing when compared to all schools nationally. They take up opportunities for training and have completed recruitment, safeguarding and Raise online data analysis training.
 - Governors have a firm grasp of the finances and of systems for pay progression and rewards for good teaching. They have supported the headteacher in some difficult decisions about staffing and promotions. Governors ensure that the additional funding is well managed and they are developing an awareness of how to evaluate its impact on students' achievement.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its students' needs. This ensures that students are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its students' needs. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	116498
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	441031

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 8, deemed Section 5, of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Foundation
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1090
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Hardy
Headteacher	Ciaran O'Dowda
Date of previous school inspection	17–18 November, 2010
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