

Crosby High School

De Villiers Avenue, Crosby, Liverpool, Merseyside, L23 2TH

Inspection dates 18–19 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Staff are very vigilant and the systems for ensuring safety are very strong.
- From low starting points when they arrive, students learn a lot at school and are well equipped for what life has in store for them when they leave. Those who are less able benefit from work that is geared toward life skills.
- The quality of teaching is typically good. Some of it is even better than this. The effectiveness of teaching assistants is good because they work in harmony with teachers.
- Students conduct themselves very well in lessons and around the school. Most students show an eagerness to learn.
- Senior leaders are doing a good job. The school is a positive learning environment. Staff are upbeat and pulling together. Expectations are high.
- The headteacher has been keen to ensure the school meets the changing needs and abilities of students. The curriculum is reviewed regularly to make sure it is entirely suitable for different groups of students. A good illustration is the Life Enrichment Activity Programme (LEAP) for less able Key Stage 4 students.
- Changes made to the way governors work have been very helpful. The specific links governors have with senior leaders have enabled them to ask pertinent questions. They have good view of the school and are playing their part in checking on its work. They are very watchful on safeguarding matters.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A very small amount of teaching requires improvement. Planned learning outcomes are not precise enough to enable teachers and students to know exactly what should be achieved in lessons.
- The written feedback given to students is not always followed up thoroughly by teachers and students.
- Some middle leaders are not monitoring their departments with enough rigour to check on the quality of their colleagues' work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed parts of 14 lessons and three sessions where students were reading as part of the Every Child Reads in Class (ERIC) programme. Two of the lessons were joint observations with senior staff who were also observed giving feedback to teachers.
- Meetings were held with members of staff, students, a representative of the local authority, the Chair of the Governing Body and an adviser commissioned by the local authority to support a cluster of schools including Crosby High. A telephone conversation was held with a tutor from a local vocational college used by the school.
- The 19 responses to Parent View (Ofsted’s online questionnaire for parents) were considered alongside the school’s own 2013 survey of parents’ views. The 42 staff questionnaires were also taken into account.
- Inspectors gathered the views of students by meeting with the school council and talking to many of them throughout the inspection.
- The work of the school was observed and a number of documents were looked at including minutes of meetings, external reports on the school, records of the monitoring of teaching, the school’s own assessment of how well it is doing, the development plan, data about students’ progress and information relating to behaviour and attendance. A sample of the students’ books was also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Eric Craven, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Marilyn Massey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Crosby High has traditionally provided for students with moderate learning difficulties. In recent years the population has changed and it now increasingly is providing for students with more complex needs.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The vast majority of students are White British and all speak English as their main language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is almost twice the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after.
- The school became a Co-operative Foundation Learning Trust in September 2010. It remains a part of Sefton local authority but benefits from the expertise of members of the Trust, which include John Moores University, the Co-operative Society, Everton Football Club and Hugh Baird College of Further Education.
- There has been a change of headteacher since the last inspection.
- The school uses Oakmere Independent College to provide vocational courses in construction and hair and beauty for a small number of students one day a week.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding and thereby improve students' rates of progress by:
 - making sure that planning for lessons consistently includes measurable targets for students and they are conveyed to students in ways they fully understand so that they and their teachers know exactly what they have to achieve and if they have done so
 - always checking that students have acted upon comments in marking about how to improve their work.
- Ensure all middle leaders are consistent in monitoring and influencing their colleagues' work by having them gain a fuller view of the work of their area of responsibility and by ensuring they guide and support their colleagues effectively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Over time the proportion of students arriving with attainment well below expectations has increased. Regardless, students make good progress from these starting points and develop skills and understanding that equip them well for further education and life in general.
- Good numbers of students make the nationally expected rates of progress across Key Stages 3 and 4. Last year the students in Year 11 made better rates of progress in English than in mathematics. In most other year groups, students are making good progress. However, those in Year 9 are making less progress than others in mathematics. The school's evaluation shows this is in part due to inaccurate assessments of students.
- In 2012/13 the students eligible for free school meals overall made better rates of progress in English than other students. They did so in mathematics as well except for Years 9 and 10 where their progress was marginally below that of others. Overall, students eligible for pupil premium do as well as, and sometimes better than, other students in English and mathematics. This is a demonstration of the good work of the school in ensuring equality of opportunities.
- The numbers of the most able students gaining GCSE qualifications varies year on year, as it is largely dependent on students' abilities. All students gain qualifications, if not always GCSEs. In 2013, a fifth of the Year 11 students gained five or more GCSE A* to G grades. In 2014, there is an increase in the number of students taking GCSEs reflecting the higher ability levels of this year group.
- All students read frequently as part of the ERIC programme. They have taken to this well because the books they can choose are motivating and are age-appropriate. Students are becoming more confident readers. In one of the ERIC observations a student who had finished her book was eagerly writing a book review about it. There were good examples of students using numeracy skills well in science and food technology lessons.
- The most able students show they can produce good quality extended writing. Less able students' writing is sometimes weak and their handwriting skills not well formed.
- Less able students develop life skills well through the LEAP programme and helpful practical skills on the vocational courses at Oakmere Independent College where they gain additional qualifications.
- The school provides well for students' social and emotional needs and as a consequence students develop their confidence and self-esteem. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. They learn to socialise well and have a good appreciation of the differences between people. They listen well and most are keen to make a contribution. These attributes contribute to them being in a good position when they leave school.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Typically there is a lot of good teaching at this school but not enough that is outstanding to ensure students make consistently splendid progress.
- The work of teaching assistants is a strength. They have been trained and given time to meet with teachers to plan lessons. As a consequence, they work well as members of subject teams.
- The most effective teaching often has students being active in their learning and this encourages them to engage with the work and be motivated; they enjoy this style of learning. Teachers use computers and interactive white boards well and these too help capture students' interest. This was the case in an English lesson where a DVD clip of Spike Milligan reciting a nonsense poem was a stimulating prelude to students working on their own lively poems.
- Praise is used particularly well and it enhances students' confidence and self-esteem.
- Marking of students' work has improved and the agreed system is consistently used. However, when a teachers' written comment asks a student to do something to improve their work it is

not always clear that the student has done it and if the teacher has checked.

- Teachers have received training to improve the way they question students and their questioning is good. They use this well to check that students fully understand and if they do not, they help them to do so.
- Teachers' planning is consistently thorough and it shows how they are broadly matching work to different groups of students. Nevertheless, the learning targets they set for the lesson are not always precise enough and nor are they always conveyed to students in ways they fully understand. This applies to the least and the most able students. As a result, teachers and students are not always in the best position to know exactly what the student is expected to achieve and whether or not they have done so. Where learning targets are more precise students are able to see their achievements and this bolsters their positive attitudes to learning.
- Reading is a feature across the curriculum as a result of a push by the school to have this more commonplace in lessons. Senior leaders creditably now have plans in place to make sure spelling and punctuation are prominent in the work of teachers in all subjects.
- Students are helped to reflect on the experiences and attitudes of others and this contributes well their good moral and spiritual development. Reflecting on poetry from the First World War in an English lesson and debating in a religious education lesson about bravery, courage and helping others were good examples of this.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of the students is good. They show others respect and courtesy by holding doors open and through the welcoming comments they make. They move from lesson to lesson in an orderly way. Misbehaviour at these times is rare as students are well supervised and know what is expected of them. Students look really neat and tidy in their green uniforms and ties and this helps give them a pride in the school. The school itself is very tidy and wall displays are vibrant and kept intact.
- In lessons, students behave well and their attitudes to learning are good. In a few lessons their attitudes are stronger than this; they are curious, intrigued and excited by their learning, especially where they see they are achieving.
- Prefects make their mark in the smooth operation of breaks and lunchtime and the work of the school council is taken seriously by students, staff and governors alike.
- The school's records over the last couple of years show that behaviour has improved. The number of occasions where fixed-term exclusion has been used has reduced. Bullying is rare and students report that when it does occur it is mainly name-calling. They are taught well about keeping safe on computers and phones. Parents who responded on Parent View unanimously agree that the school makes sure students are well behaved.
- Students' attendance is high compared to other special schools but marginally lower than the national average for secondary schools. The school makes strong and effective efforts to ensure students attend regularly.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students say they feel safe and their parents endorse this view. Students know about keeping safe because they are taught well and it is high on the school's agenda. The school's systems are strong in ensuring students and the buildings and grounds are safe and secure. Governors play a full part in making sure there are high safeguarding standards. Staff are suitably vetted before appointment and they are trained to make sure they are watchful for any worrying signs.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's drive is tangible. She has conveyed a strong message to staff about having high expectations and focusing on students making as much progress as possible. Staff have responded well and are on-board.

- There has been a staffing restructure at senior and middle leaders level and not all posts are yet filled. Senior staff in post are working effectively together and they have clear roles for leading aspects of the school's work and for checking the school's effectiveness; they do this well.
- Some middle leaders are less well advanced in ensuring that the work of their areas of responsibility are rigorously monitored and that they influence their colleague's work. They have undertaken joint lesson observations with senior leaders but are not regularly checking on the quality of teaching themselves.
- The school has achieved a Rights Respecting School Award and this reflects its inclusive nature. It has responded well to its changing population of students by training staff and changing the curriculum. An intervention team of four members of staff are providing additional literacy, well-being and personal support to some students including those eligible for pupil premium funding. Although this work is fairly new there are some indications of it having a positive affect, for example in reading gains for students.
- The school meets the needs of the wide ability range of students well. There are a wide range of clubs to enrich the curriculum and the school uses other people, including its Trust members to provide a suitably wide and varied curriculum which the students enjoy.
- The evaluation of the school's performance by senior staff is accurate. The school's development plan stems from this evaluation and it sets out the school's priorities well. The plan is monitored closely to make sure the school is on track to achieve the improvements it wants to make.
- The leadership and management of teaching are good. There are very good systems for managing staff's performance and for training. Underperformance in teaching is tackled through a supportive but rigorous improvement process.
- Data from teachers' assessments of students are marshalled well in the main to help senior and middle leaders monitor the school. However comparison of students' rates of progress in different subjects is not as strong as it could be because of differences in the systems used.
- Parents on the whole are very supportive of the school. Indeed almost unanimously they said they would recommend the school to others. They receive good information about the curriculum in the colourful and informative termly newsletter.
- The local authority provided support and had a watchful eye when there was a change of headteacher in 2011. The school is now suitably on the local authority's 'light touch' schedule as it rightly has confidence in the school and its capacity to improve further.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved over the last couple of years. Although a full complement of governors is not in place replacements are in train including the appointment of the school's recently retired adviser who will bring very relevant experience.
 - Committees have been restructured so they link with closely with key aspects of the school's work and with senior leaders responsible for each of these aspects. This has helped governors gain a fuller and more accurate picture of the school. It has put them in a position where they are asking probing questions and not taking information and data on the school's performance at face value. Governors access local authority training and have arranged their own bespoke training on the school's ways of working. This too has helped them get a good view of the school. The chair and other governors are regular visitors to the school.
 - Governors are given information on pupil premium funding and its impact and how high quality teaching is being pursued and underperformance is being tackled.

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 pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils 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 pupils' needs. Pupils 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 pupils 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	104980
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	439639

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	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Halls
Headteacher	Toni Oxtton-Grant
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2010
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