

Crookhey Hall School

Garstang Road, Cockerham, Lancaster, Lancashire, LA2 0HA

Inspection dates 21–23 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school because

- Students make good progress from low starting points as a result of good teaching and a range of learning activities which are well matched to their needs and interests.
- The attendance of most students is good and demonstrates excellent improvement from their attendance before entering the school.
- The attitudes and behaviour of most students are good. The school's records show how effective procedures to improve behaviour have a positive impact on students' achievements.
- The achievement of the small number of students aged over 16 is good as a result of good teaching which meets their individual needs.
- The good quality of teaching enables students to enjoy the wide range of subjects and learning activities provided. The teaching staff demonstrate outstanding commitment and resolution in the quality of the support and motivation provided for students.
- Senior leaders work very effectively with the proprietor's representatives to improve the quality of teaching and students' achievement. The excellent leadership of the recently appointed headteacher has resulted in good improvements in students' achievement since the last inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Despite leaders' robust efforts, a small number of students are persistent absentees and this affects their achievement.
- Students' literacy skills are not as strong as they could be. There is not a consistent emphasis on improving handwriting, spelling and grammar across all subjects taught.
- The level of challenge in written tasks for the most-able students is not consistent across all curriculum areas.
- Students do not have sufficient opportunities for first-hand experience to fully develop their understanding of, and respect for, the variety of cultures and beliefs in the wider community.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed ten lessons, a number of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with a number of members of staff and 14 responses from staff to an inspection questionnaire were considered. The inspector also took account of 17 responses to a student survey and had informal discussions with a number of students.
- Account was also taken of ten responses to a school questionnaire for parents and carers, together with a telephone conversation with one parent. There were no responses to the Ofsted online Parent View questionnaire.
- A number of school documents, including policies and procedures, school performance data, and records of incidents, accidents and sanctions were considered.
- Telephone conversations were also held with the representatives of two external providers of vocational education courses.
- A request for consideration of a material change to admit girls to the school was also considered during the inspection.

Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Crookhey Hall School is a day special school for boys, located in a Victorian country house with extensive grounds, near Garstang in Lancashire. It is owned and operated by Acorn Care and Education.
- Students are admitted to full-time education at the school as a result of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All have been excluded from at least one previous school.
- The school is registered to admit up to 68 boys in the age range 10 to 17 years. There are currently 28 boys on roll, aged 13 to 17 years. All students on roll have a statement of special educational needs or an education, care and health plan.
- The school aims 'to meet the needs of students, preparing them for adult and working life in the 21st Century...to meet and then exceed national standards in achievement, attainment and progression'.
- In addition to the academic and vocational provision on-site, the school makes additional provision, through 4Techmoto in Preston, and at Lancaster and Morecambe College, of courses in motor vehicle maintenance and welding.
- The school was last inspected in October 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
 - further improving students' handwriting, spelling and punctuation and their ability to apply these skills more consistently to their work in all subjects
 - ensuring that there is consistent rigour and challenge in the writing tasks provided for the most-able students.
- Put in place further strategies to tackle the obstacles to further improvement in the attendance of individual students.
- Provide additional first-hand experiences to further develop students' understanding of, and respect for, the diversity of cultures and beliefs in the wider community.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The quality of leadership and management is good and has contributed effectively to improvements in the work of the school since the last inspection.
- The headteacher has an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school. He has taken a strong lead in assessing how well the school is doing and writing the school's plans for the future. These present an accurate analysis of improvements in teaching, students' achievement and students' personal development.
- Under the leadership of the headteacher, responsibilities for important aspects of school improvement have been shared effectively with colleagues in an emerging senior management team. Senior leaders communicate a vision of high aspiration for what students can achieve, and hold all members of staff to account for their contributions to students' success.
- All members of staff who completed an inspection questionnaire agree that they are proud to be members of staff at the school and that the school is well led and managed. A number of staff commented on improvement over the last twelve months.
- The headteacher ensures that appropriate targets are agreed with each member of staff; he checks on the quality of teaching and the resulting outcomes for students. Additional members of the senior leadership team have taken on responsibilities for aspects of staff and student management and development. These roles are making an increasingly positive contribution to the success of the school. As a result, there are good opportunities for staff training and for staff members to enhance their qualifications.
- Middle leadership roles have recently been implemented. Heads of subjects, for example, are assessing and developing the quality of students' experiences effectively in their individual areas of responsibility.
- All aspects of the work of the school are based on agreed policy and procedures. The staff work well together to ensure that requirements are implemented effectively. The premises and accommodation at the school are maintained to a good standard and all aspects of health and safety, including fire safety, are implemented robustly.
- The quality of leadership has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and the achievement of students. Arrangements for the spiritual, moral, and social development of students are effective. All aspects of safeguarding policy and practice are kept under review, including statutory requirements for the regular training of staff.
- Senior leaders have ensured that students have access to a suitable range and quality of learning experiences, and maintain excellent communication and working relationships with alternative providers. This is endorsed by the representatives of external providers of vocational education courses. Arrangements for careers advice and planning for students' transition towards leaving school are effective.
- The headteacher has introduced commendable recent improvements in the school's links with parents, and ensures that all required information, including the school's complaints procedure, is made available to parents.
- This report's recommendations for improvements in teaching, students' behaviour and personal development, and their cultural awareness, largely reflect priorities already identified in the school's improvement planning. Leaders, through their positive impact on the school's development, have demonstrated the capacity for further improvement.

■ The governance of the school:

The governance of the school is good and provides strong support and effective challenge to senior leaders. The proprietor's representatives hold governance meetings with the headteacher and provide good opportunities for the sharing of good practice across the schools in the region.

The company's Area Education Executive is responsible for the supervision and support for the headteacher. This role is fulfilled effectively, and is based on a thorough analysis of the school's data on students' academic and personal development, together with the school's judgements about the quality of teaching and the management of staff performance.

The proprietors also employ external consultants to conduct 'health checks' on the school's performance. These result in written reports which contribute to the discussion between the proprietors, representatives and the headteacher, and enable the school's vision and targets to be refined and evaluated appropriately.

The school's governors, working in partnership with senior leaders, have ensured that all the

independent school standards are met.

- It is recommended that the school's request for a material change to admit girls be approved.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students placed at the school have a history of disrupted previous educational experiences, including through disruptive behaviour and poor attendance. The school is successful in creating a positive culture in which students cooperate and take their work seriously.
- Students mostly develop positive attitudes to their learning; they adjust rapidly to the school's expectations of cooperation and respect. They respect the staff with whom they work and, as a result, make good progress with their learning across a range of subjects. There is little low-level disruption in classrooms and the staff are skilled at managing any potential issues before they escalate.
- There are high levels of supervision throughout the day, including during social occasions such as breaks and lunchtime. The atmosphere in the school is not oppressive but based on mutual respect through which students adapt positively to the high expectations of the staff.
- A very large majority of the parents who expressed a view about the school believe that behaviour is managed appropriately and that their boys feel safe in school. Similarly, most of the boys who completed a school survey believe that any bullying is managed well; the school's records confirm this view. A small minority of parents are concerned about the impact of negative relationships on the behaviour of their boys.
- Incidents of unacceptable behaviour do occur, but these are managed well and are not allowed to disrupt teaching and learning for other students. The school's records demonstrate that fixed-term exclusions have declined dramatically in the last twelve months, as has the need for physical interventions to manage behaviour. Similarly, there has been a significant decrease in the number of incidents resulting in damage to property.
- The school has introduced a number of strategies, including effective reward systems, to improve students' attendance. However, persistent absence by a small minority of students remains a challenge for the school and has a detrimental impact on the achievement of these students.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. The school assesses risk thoroughly in all the activities provided, including access to off-site college courses and outdoor activities. Procedures for the safe recruitment of staff, training in child protection and first aid, and the routine procedures to ensure fire safety are all exemplary.
- The school, through the quality of relationships and the support provided for personal development, makes a positive contribution to students' spiritual, moral and social development. The majority of students develop self-confidence and experience success. Students have opportunities to consider differences between cultures and backgrounds, but although regulatory requirements are met, students have limited opportunities for first-hand experience of the diversity of cultures and beliefs in modern Britain.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching over time is good and has a strong positive impact on students' learning and academic achievement. Relationships between staff and students are good and characterised by humour, patience and high expectations.
- The staff have a good understanding of the personal characteristics of individual students, including their emotional and social needs. As a result, teachers' planning across the full range of subjects is imaginative and ensures that all students have the opportunity to succeed. Plans to engage and interest students who were not interested in learning are mostly successful and result in good learning.
- An outstanding feature of teaching in a number of subjects is the quality of dialogue between staff and students. The variety, depth and persistence of teachers' questioning skills ensure that students are required to reflect carefully and to continuously develop the quality of their oral responses.
- The working relationship between teachers and other adults, including learning support assistants, in the classroom is also exemplary. As a result, no student's needs are ignored and all are challenged by skilful questions, positive encouragement and astute advice to make continued efforts and to give of their best.
- Teaching staff provide a variety of interesting learning experiences and students respond positively, for example when learning about the First World War in history, exploring pop art in an art lesson, designing an advertising campaign in English or rounding up decimals to whole numbers in mathematics.

- Students learn effectively through the range of practical activities provided for them, such as hands-on experiments in science or exploring the components of a desk-top computer in information and communication technology (ICT). Students are particularly well motivated, and demonstrate excellent teamwork through the outstanding impact of learning about horticulture and catering.
- Students also respond well to a weekly programme of outdoor activities which provides access to a range of individual and team sports. In addition, a further programme of activities on a Friday afternoon supplements the variety of interesting and challenging activities available, including football matches against other schools, fishing, golf, gym, canoeing and geocaching. These activities make a good contribution to students' physical well-being and to their social development.
- There is a clear emphasis on the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills in the activities provided for students. Students' skills in handwriting, grammar and spelling are mostly below average and many make good progress over time. However, there is not always sufficient challenge in the quality and rigour of written work demanded of students, particularly the more-able students.
- The school's arrangements for the assessment of students' progress are excellent. Students' work is mostly marked effectively and helpful suggestions for improvement are provided. All members of staff provide assessment data regularly and this is used effectively to set targets and to assess the extent of students' progress over time. As a result, students are mostly prepared well to succeed with their examinations and to achieve external accreditation.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The achievement of students is good. From their different starting points most students make good progress with their learning once they have settled in to the expectations and requirements of the school.
- The majority of students enter the school with standards of attainment which are below those of similar aged students nationally. This is largely the result of students' lack of enthusiasm for learning, non-attendance and poor behaviour in previous educational settings.
- Disadvantaged students make progress at a similar rate to their peers and achieve well. Particularly noticeable is students' increasing willingness to read for pleasure and to enjoy increasing success in their ability to understand and interpret the meanings conveyed in a variety of texts. Students demonstrated, for example, success in reflecting on and interpreting the motivation of characters in the novel *Of Mice and Men*.
- All students have statements of special educational needs, mostly due to learning difficulties or emotional and social conditions which negatively affect their ability to make the most of the opportunities provided. The staff are very skilled at providing learning activities which engage and interest students. As a result, most students respond positively and make good academic progress over time.
- More-able students achieve success in Level 2 functional skills and vocational qualifications. Recent GCSE results also demonstrate success at foundation level grades. These students are not always presented with a consistently high level of challenge in the written tasks required of them across the full range of subject studied. However, a small number of students are predicted to achieve higher level GCSE grades in the coming year.
- Leaders have implemented reliable, continuous arrangements for the assessment of students' achievement; these are recorded and analysed extremely well. The large majority of current students are making at least expected progress in English, mathematics and science, and a few are exceeding expectations. Students demonstrate good skills in the use of ICT to undertake research and present their work in a number of subjects.
- The majority of students make at least expected progress in the improvement of their literacy and some exceed expectations. They do not generally close the gap completely in their literacy skills before they leave the school. The school has firm plans in place to implement an appropriately resourced scheme, together with additional staff training, to address the shortfall in literacy skills.
- A large majority of students make at least expected progress in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 11. The majority exceed expected progress in at least two of these core subjects. Standards of achievement at the end of Year 11 show progressive improvement over the last three years. The school's records show that failure to make at least expected progress is almost always associated with persistent absence from school.
- The range of subjects and courses available ensures that students' interests and needs are addressed effectively. In addition to their achievements in core subjects, students demonstrate success in a variety of externally accredited courses, including entry level certificates, functional skills levels 1 and 2 awards, and GCSE examinations. Awards were achieved, for example, for the first time in 2014 in French,

geography, history and religious education. Students also make excellent progress in level 1 and 2 awards in vocational subjects including horticulture, construction, welding, catering and motor vehicle maintenance; this includes those courses studied off-site with alternative providers.

- The attainment of most students remains below the standard expected for their age. However, the extent of their progress, and the levels of external accreditation achieved, enables the great majority of leavers to enter further education colleges, employment or other educational placements: in 2014 all leavers achieved these placements.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The school has recently expanded its provision to provide for the educational needs of a small number of post-16 students. As yet, no student in this age range has completed a full year or moved on from the school.
- The post-16 courses provide students, who may not be ready to move on to further education at the end of Year 11, with additional time and personalised support to achieve additional qualifications. In some cases, the learning activities provided have a strong and appropriate emphasis on the improvement of literacy and numeracy skills, together with the development of emotional resilience.
- Occasionally, post-16 students may be admitted to the school as a result of a recent change of residence and a similar requirement to achieve further qualifications and social development before taking up a place in further employment or training.
- These students are mostly taught alongside students in Key Stage 4 where the good quality of teaching and the excellent range of subjects available meet their individual needs. Post-16 students behave well, take their learning seriously and demonstrate respect for the staff and the facilities of the school.
- The leadership and management of arrangements for these post-16 students are good. Each post-16 student is supported with a plan to manage their transition into further education or training after one or possibly two years of further study.
- Students in this provision are provided with opportunities to enter for the full range of available qualifications and to benefit from the vocational courses on offer. These arrangements are effective and well suited to students' needs. No post-16 student has yet completed external examinations.
- Plans are in place to provide these students with relevant work experience to meet their individual emotional and social needs. No student has yet been in attendance for long enough for these arrangements to be implemented.
- The school's arrangements for students' safety and welfare are implemented with the same rigour as for the rest of the school.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	119849
Inspection number	446271
DfE registration number	888/6022

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted 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.

Type of school	Day special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10–17 years
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	2
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Group
Chair	Graham McEwan
Headteacher	Peter O'Connell
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,000–£30,000
Telephone number	01524 792618
Fax number	01524 792684
Email address	p.o'connell@crookheyhallschool.co.uk

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.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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 information 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'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

