

# Cruckton Hall School

Cruckton, Shrewsbury SY5 8PR

## Inspection dates

7 January 2016

## Overall outcome

**Independent school standards met**

## Context of the inspection

- This unannounced progress monitoring inspection visit was made at the request of the Department for Education, the registration authority for independent schools, to check the school's progress in implementing its action plan following the full inspection in June 2015.

## Main findings

### Curriculum

- At the time of the last inspection, pupils were not inspired to learn and make good progress. Some pupils had already covered much of the work that they were given and they did not see why they had to attend school. The school's information about pupils' achievements and their special educational needs was not used effectively by all staff. Not all pupils, particularly the most able, were given work that met their needs and challenged them to achieve more.
- In its action plan, senior leaders proposed a revision of the school's curriculum policy and the development of a more broadly based curriculum that was better suited to pupils' needs. They planned to ensure compliance with the independent schools standards and the new National Curriculum, as required in pupils' statements of special educational needs or education, health and care plans. Senior leaders outlined their intention to provide schemes of work that were comprehensive and autism-friendly. They also set out their plans to develop the provision for pupils' careers education and work experience.
- This progress monitoring inspection found that senior leaders have successfully led and managed the review and revision of the curriculum policy, subject policies and schemes of work. The school has broadened the range of academic and vocational courses it offers. In particular, staff are developing outdoor education provision with the involvement of alternative providers and specialist facilities in some aspects of this work. The provision now has much greater relevance to pupils' ages, interests and preferred learning styles. There is clear progression being developed in planning pupils' learning. Teaching plans include discrete references to developing pupils' personal skills, particularly their social and work-based skills, and specifically the promotion of British values and raising awareness of differing views. Scrutiny of pupils' timetables indicates that they are now accessing all the required areas of learning for independent schools. This is supplemented by lessons in French, Spanish or Japanese as modern foreign languages, in line with the specific requirements in pupils' statements or education plans.
- The school is successfully developing its provision for careers education. An external consultant supports the school's in-house work. Older pupils benefit from one-to-one advice and guidance, and successfully participate in a range of work experience placements.
- Leaders rightly assert that the new curriculum has had a positive impact on improving teaching and accelerating pupils' progress. In particular, there has been a reduction in the frequency of serious behavioural incidents in lessons and around the school, including fewer occasions where physical intervention has been used. The school is making good progress in implementing its plans for developing the curriculum and now meets all of the requirements for this part of the standards.

## Teaching and assessment

- The previous inspection found that some lessons broke down and not much work was completed by pupils. This was because teachers and other staff spent too much time trying to manage or control pupils' behaviour and not always succeeding. This meant that learning time was not used fruitfully in some classes and pupils' work revealed that, at times, little had been achieved. Even when pupils attended lessons and worked well, teachers were sometimes reluctant to challenge them to think harder or too quick to provide the answer to a question. Some more-able pupils said they found the work too easy. Too many teachers were not skilled in gaining the interest of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and in managing their challenging behaviours.
- In their action plan, senior leaders outlined their proposals to develop the capacity of the school's middle managers to introduce and drive change, and to take greater responsibility for the quality of teaching, subject assessment and pupils' achievement. To improve the quality of pupils' learning, senior leaders planned to improve the quality of teachers' planning to take better account of pupils' interests and needs. They also proposed replacing the school's existing schemes for pupils' personal development with an externally assessed programme focusing on developing their learning and life skills. In addition, the school planned to broaden the range of activities available during and beyond lessons.
- To support improvement, senior leaders proposed providing training for staff in managing challenging behaviour, revising the existing sanctions and rewards system, and developing the role of the behaviour support team to assist teaching staff. Alongside this, they outlined plans to implement a schedule for regularly monitoring the quality of teachers' planning and teaching in lessons. They also proposed putting in place a programme of continuing professional development (CPD) for staff, embedding the whole-school marking scheme into teachers' practice and developing systems to ensure that assessment was consistent across all subject areas and attainment was in line with expected outcomes for similar ASD cohorts nationally.
- This inspection found that the roles and responsibilities of heads of department (middle managers) are being developed so that they are being held accountable for pupils' progress. At this stage, these leaders say they are receiving various degrees of support, with senior leaders identifying emerging strong practice that provides a good exemplar for further development. There is a comprehensive programme of CPD planned for teachers and support staff. Rigorous performance management for teachers has been introduced with challenging but achievable targets. Work to ensure that assessment is consistent across all subject areas is ongoing. There have been marked improvements in the English and mathematics. Improvements in science are slower, which is linked to continuing issues with the quality of teaching in this subject. There is better awareness of the expected outcomes for similar ASD cohorts nationally; links with schools in Telford, Shrewsbury and Oswestry are helping to moderate pupil outcomes and raising the expectations staff have of their pupils.
- The range of opportunities within and beyond the school day have been increased, particularly with outdoor activities, such as work with horses and horticulture. Pupils are now developing the skills they need to learn effectively in lessons and to be prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. There is a strong focus on helping pupils to relate to others and adults, work with their peers, and be aware that others have views and opinions that are equally valuable. Senior leaders demonstrate that the revised curriculum and more appropriate approaches to learning have successfully engaged pupils and resulted in better participation in learning and improved behaviour in lessons. As a result, pupils are rising to the challenge that staff now provide and they are achieving more.
- Senior leaders have revised the structure of the school day so that time is not wasted and there is a 'business-like' approach to learning at all times. There has been a much greater focus on pupils' attendance and promoting their ongoing engagement in lessons. The establishment of the Behaviour And Support Environment (BASE) has been a positive feature in providing support for pupils. They are, for example, able to refer themselves to the BASE as part of managing their own behaviour, enabling teachers to continue their lessons without other pupils becoming distracted or upset. The introduction of a bespoke monitoring system means that the school is

able to analyse and monitor patterns of behaviour. Staff are then able to provide the well-targeted help that pupils need in overcoming difficulties. Staff have received training and support in using appropriate strategies and managing behaviour effectively. Typically, behaviour is well managed in lessons, with time used effectively and pupils achieving well.

- Senior leaders have revised and reviewed schemes of work with subject leaders. They have introduced a common format for teachers' planning which focuses on pupils' needs and preferred styles of learning. Senior leaders are monitoring teachers' planning on a regular basis and undertaking regular classroom observations and work scrutiny. The school is able to provide clear evidence that improved teaching is helping pupils to make better progress as the result of the better challenge their work provides.
- Senior leaders have reviewed the school's assessment information and how this is used. They have adopted a commercial computer-based system to record and track pupils' progress. Staff have been given training in using this and more is planned as the system is developed. A baseline has been determined so that pupils' progress may be more accurately tracked. This has included working with other schools and external subject specialists. Staff training has included advice and guidance on how to support pupils with autism and dyslexia. Moreover, senior leaders are developing a culture where all teachers have responsibility for supporting pupils' literacy and numeracy with their subject areas.
- The school is making good progress in implementing its action plan. All the requirements for teaching and assessment are now met.

### **Pupils' behaviour**

- At the time of the last inspection, pupils, staff and some parents did not consider that the school dealt with behaviour and with bullying effectively. There were too many behavioural incidents which left pupils and staff vulnerable. Some pupils used discriminatory language, including making racist comments. Some teachers were quick to signal when unacceptable language was used but others were not. As a result, pupils received confusing messages as to what was acceptable behaviour and what was not, and the sanctions linked to this were not always clear. While the school had appropriate behaviour and anti-bullying policies in place, these were not followed consistently. This weakened the school's support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their preparation for life and work in modern Britain.
- The school's action plan included proposals for revising the behaviour and anti-bullying policies and ensuring that these were consistently implemented. Alongside this, senior leaders proposed improving the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by a particular emphasis on improved social skills, respect and tolerance and a better understanding of right and wrong.
- This inspection found that senior leaders have reviewed and revised policies and procedures. Senior leaders have strengthened the school's behaviour policy, provided training for staff and increased pupils' awareness of the school's new expectations, together with the rewards and sanctions that are used. Senior leaders have established an effective computer-based system to record and analyse all incidents. This information is available to those who need to know how pupils are behaving and enables them to respond quickly.
- The BASE manager and supporting team are in post, and private study facilities are now in use. A second room is being developed to provide play-based therapy. Increasingly, pupils are taking responsibility for regulating and managing their own behaviour. The number of incidents has reduced and pupils are more engaged in learning as a result of the behaviour support they now receive, coupled with improvements in the quality of the curriculum and teaching.
- Senior leaders have reviewed the anti-bullying strategy and implemented new strategies. An external professional group has delivered a drama-based performance to help pupils understand the causes and effects of bullying, and to raise their awareness of restorative justice. Staff have been trained and given guidance in identifying, recording and responding to bullying. This training is ongoing and includes specific provision for staff new to the school.
- Senior leaders have raised expectations for both pupils and staff, and established clear parameters for behaviour. Lesson plans include discrete teaching about right and wrong, respect

and tolerance in lessons. Staff are using rewards and sanctions effectively to promote acceptable and better behaviour.

- Incidents of discriminatory language use and racist language have declined sharply. During the inspection visit, no discriminatory language was encountered, even when pupils were stressed. Staff and pupils agree that this is now typical.
- The school is making good progress in implementing its action plan proposals and the requirements for these standards are now met.

### **Leadership and management**

- The previous inspection found that leaders and the proprietor had not ensured that all of the independent school standards were met. They had not ensured that all pupils felt safe and that the teaching and curriculum enabled pupils to achieve well. Leaders had an overgenerous view of some pupils' progress.
- In their action plan, senior leaders effectively outlined their proposals for improving the quality of the curriculum, teaching and assessment; the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for keeping pupils safe; and for how they proposed to develop and train staff, monitor the quality of the school's provision and hold staff accountable for pupils' progress.
- The evidence from this inspection indicates that the school is making good progress in implementing its action plan proposals. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's emerging strengths. They recognise where further support and develop is needed and have clear plans to bring about the required improvements.
- As part of this inspection, the school's safeguarding policy was scrutinised, together with the single central register of the checks made on the suitability of adults to work with pupils. The school's safeguarding policy has been revised in the light of the statutory guidance outlined in *Keeping children safe in education (July 2015)* and includes reference to the latest mandatory reporting requirements effective from 31 October 2015. The policy is published in full on the school's website. The school has made and recorded all the required checks on new staff prior to them taking up their appointments.
- The school is making good progress in implementing its action plan proposals and the all requirements of the independent school standards are now met.

### **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

**The school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements**

## Inspection team

Michael Best, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

## Information about this school

- Cruckton Hall School is a special school located on the outskirts of Shrewsbury. It was originally registered in 1981 and educates boys aged 8 to 19 years.
- At its last inspection in June 2015, the school was judged to be inadequate and a number of the independent school regulations were not met. The school submitted an action plan outlining its proposals to address the failings identified in the inspection report. This was evaluated and accepted by Ofsted in October 2015.
- There are 35 pupils on roll. There are currently no sixth form learners on the roll of the school and there have not been for some time.
- All pupils have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder and associated conditions (ASD), and in particular Asperger syndrome. Many pupils have other diagnoses of special educational needs, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Almost all have histories of severely challenging behaviour. Many have not attended school regularly for some time. About a fifth are looked after by different local authorities from across England and Wales.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British. Very few have English as an additional language.
- The school works with a number of alternative providers and off-site specialist facilities, namely Shrewsbury College, Walford College, Berrywood Stables and Synchrony Development (equine therapy). Some pupils are accompanied by staff from the school, at least initially, when they attend off-site placements.
- The school receives the pupil premium funding for a small number of pupils who are in the care of a local authority. This funding provides additional support for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Recently completed building work provides discrete office accommodation and enhanced facilities for the inclusion unit, known as the BASE, to where pupils who are having difficulty in class can withdraw.
- The school is owned by the Kisimul Group, which owns two other independent special schools in England. The group employs a number of company managers for different aspects of their schools' work, such as for health and safety, safeguarding and education.
- There have been a number of staff changes, particularly in the last two years and at a senior level. The consultant headteacher joined the school at the start of the current school year and deputy headteacher during the summer term 2015. Several subject teachers and support staff are new to the school.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	123619
<b>Inspection number</b>	462914
<b>DfE registration number</b>	893/6017

This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

<b>Type of school</b>	Independent school
<b>School status</b>	Independent residential special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	9–19 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	N/A
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	35
<b>Of which, number of pupils in the sixth form</b>	0
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Kisimul Group Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Margaret Hill
<b>Headteacher</b>	Linda Moss (consultant headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9–11 June 2015
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£90,143
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