

Crookhey Hall School

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

Inspection dates

23–25 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school meets all regulatory requirements of the independent school standards.
- The new head of school has quickly established an effective team. Relationships at all levels are warm, open and transparent. She has rapidly gained the confidence of all those associated with the school.
- The rich curriculum and good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contribute to pupils' good personal development. Pupils are well prepared for their future lives as British citizens.
- Pupils' behaviour is good, as is the support for pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. High-quality staff training ensures that staff are able to establish a calm environment.
- Staff are vigilant in all aspects of pupil welfare and safeguard pupils effectively. Pupils say that they feel safe, secure and know how to raise any concerns that they might have.
- Pupils make good progress during their time at the school. Their attendance is good and higher than in their previous schools.
- Sixth-form provision is good. Students make good progress as a result of good teaching. As a result, students are in a strong position to secure places in education, training or employment when they leave.
- Teaching is typically good. Staff assess pupils accurately and meticulously track their progress through the school. However, tasks set for pupils, at times do not match their needs closely enough and opportunities to build on prior learning are sometimes missed.
- Well supported by the executive headteacher and governors, the head of school has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and sets out realistic plans for future improvement. There is insufficient detail in some of the plans to evaluate the impact of what has been introduced or to identify how success will be measured in future actions.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - school plans evaluate the impact of what has been changed and identify how the success of any proposed actions will be measured in future evaluations.
- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - activities encourage pupils to build on what they already know
 - tasks set for pupils are consistently pitched at the right level for them.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The head of school was appointed to her current post in September 2017. She has provided a sharp focus and determination to improve all aspects of the school. Well supported by the executive headteacher, leaders and staff, she sets high expectations for all and has promoted an ambitious 'can do' culture.
- The success of the current leadership can be illustrated by growing pupil numbers as parents and local authority partners are increasingly placing their faith in the school. This is echoed by the overwhelming majority of staff who are proud to work in the school.
- Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the complexities and need of pupils in their care. Leaders are reflective and are continually thinking of how to improve the quality of education they provide. For example, improvements in the teaching of academic subjects have been complemented by the growth in vocational opportunities for pupils, making very good use of the school's extensive grounds. This has enabled pupils to experience success both inside and outside the classroom.
- The school's evaluation of its performance is an accurate one. Leaders have identified the right priorities and provided a clear plan of how they intend to make improvements. For example, the school's self-evaluation document and improvement plans are comprehensive and realistic. However, they are not precise enough. They do not always refer to the impact of the changes that have been made or how the success of future improvements will be measured.
- Staff performance is managed successfully, with regular opportunities provided by leaders to meet colleagues and provide support where necessary. It is used effectively to improve staff performance. Targets are clear and relevant to the individual members of staff and directly linked to school improvement and pupils' progress. The overwhelming majority of staff comment positively on the improvements introduced by the head of school.
- The curriculum is rich and varied. It is tailored to meet the wide range of needs of the pupils, most of whom have struggled in their previous schools. As well as helping pupils develop their basic skills, such as reading, writing and mathematics, teachers carefully plan bespoke learning activities which motivate and challenge pupils. These include a wide range of vocational courses, including horticulture, construction, catering and hair and beauty. Many of these lead to externally validated qualifications. Consequently, pupils enjoy their learning, make good progress and, in almost all cases, their behaviour improves.
- Pupils' premium funding is used well to provide additional resources and support for pupils who are eligible to receive it. For example, personal tablets, laptops and revision guides were purchased following a discussion that took account of parents and care workers' views. Local authorities who fund pupils' places check on how the funding is being used and ensure that it is making a difference for pupils.
- Pupils have access to a wide range of enrichment activities. They spoke enthusiastically to inspectors about the many opportunities afforded to them, which include visits to outdoor

education centres, sporting and leisure activities as well as museums and galleries. Many are planned for Friday afternoons and reward a successful week in school. 'It's great because we have enough minibuses to take us all out if we've had a good week' is how one pupil explained the system. Such activities promote pupils' self-esteem and develop an understanding of how they need to behave in different situations.

- Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development and the promotion of British values is threaded sensitively throughout the curriculum according to pupils' understanding and need. It celebrates different beliefs and cultures as well as promoting equality of opportunity and diversity. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for their future lives.
- Staff are very effective role models in showing pupils, through their own actions and behaviour, how to form positive working relationships and get on with each other. Feedback from local authority officers who place pupils in the school confirm the positive improvements most pupils make in their behaviour, attitudes to learning, attendance and self-esteem following their placement at Crookhey Hall. They also comment on the responsiveness of the current school leadership in tailoring the curriculum for the individual pupils. It helps to explain why pupil numbers have increased so rapidly over the last year.
- Leaders provide a high-quality programme of professional development for all staff to develop their skills. It includes a comprehensive induction programme that leaves staff confident and well prepared when they start working with pupils.

Governance

- The chair of the governing body is well supported by the rest of the governors.
- Governors share the head of school's ambitions and determination for the school to become an outstanding school. Governors have a wide range of expertise to support leaders in the school. They have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They hold leaders diligently to account for the quality of education and care they provide to pupils.
- Governors carefully monitor the finances to ensure the financial stability of the school. For example, they have been instrumental in securing the finance for developing the outdoor learning and vocational workshops to ensure that pupils have access to a high-quality learning environment.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding which permeates the school. Staff understand the need to protect pupils against all potential risks. Staff, irrespective of their role, know each pupil extremely well. They remain vigilant and keep a watchful eye on them. Risk assessments are thorough and are regularly monitored by leaders to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are kept up to date in line with current government legislation and guidance. All staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding. This high-quality training provides staff with the skills and confidence to take rapid action when concerns arise.
- Safeguarding and child protection policies are readily accessible to parents on the website or in school. Evidence from the inspection confirms that these policies are implemented effectively. Pupils confirmed that they feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers are ambitious for their pupils and do all they can to help them succeed and achieve well. They create a positive learning environment with activities that are interesting and motivating. Consequently, pupils enjoy school, attend regularly and make good progress in their learning.
- Pupils' work, observations of lessons, individual records and leaders' records of teaching observations provide strong evidence that the quality of teaching and pupils' learning are good across the school.
- Teaching is securely based on building good working relationships with the pupils. Teachers and support staff know each pupil exceptionally well. They are skilful at working with pupils, restoring their confidence and self-esteem and encouraging them to learn. This creates an atmosphere in lessons that both supports and challenges pupils to make academic and social progress and begin to overcome gaps in their prior learning.
- Pupils comment positively on their experiences in lessons at Crookhey Hall. Teachers make it much more interesting than in my last school. I'm able to stay in lessons longer and I know my work has improved, you just need to look in my books' is typical of responses made by pupils.
- Teaching benefits from designated teaching rooms for subjects such as art, catering, information and communication technology, English, mathematics and science. Additionally, in separate buildings housed in the school grounds, there are impressive facilities for construction, horticulture and mechanics. There are also vegetable plots and pens for housing the animals that pupils care for. Consequently, pupils have a wide range of opportunities to pursue their particular interests and their rates of progress improves in these areas as a result.
- Detailed, baseline assessments of pupils' achievements are undertaken when they join the school. This provides staff with information about pupil's prior learning, identifying what they can already do, and where they need further support. Teaching in small groups provides pupils with the intensive support that most of them need. This information is generally used well to plan next steps in learning. Just occasionally, teachers fail to encourage pupils to reflect on their prior learning or pitch work at the right level. Pupils can become frustrated when they are unable to make links with what they already know or when the work set for them is too hard or too easy.
- Staff manage behaviour in lessons effectively. They demonstrate endless patience and tolerance when dealing with challenging behaviour. Staff successfully avoid confrontation and do not allow situations to escalate. They set clear expectations for pupils, challenge unacceptable behaviour and explain the consequences.
- Systems for tracking pupils' progress are good. They are fully in line with national curriculum expectations and enable staff to set pupils challenging but realistic targets.
- Staff seize every opportunity to develop pupils' social skills, emphasising the importance of personal qualities such as respect and valuing each other's opinion. For example, attendance at the breakfast club at the start of the day provides an opportunity for discussion and planning the day ahead. During these sessions most pupils communicate with their peers and adults in a sensible, mature way in a calm environment.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils who join the school have generally failed to thrive in their mainstream educational setting. Many arrive with extremely challenging behaviour, and social, emotional and mental health needs. Staff ensure that transitions when pupils join the school are as smooth as possible.
- Leaders ensure that individual risk assessments are firmly in place and carefully followed. Staff have a good understanding of each pupils' emotional and behavioural characteristics and they have all the skills and techniques needed to manage pupils' behaviour successfully.
- Pupils benefit from strong pastoral support systems. This ensures that they are settled at the start of each school day and engage with their learning. All staff are well trained in observing pupils' behaviour to spot any concerns about their welfare or attitudes. They are quick to intervene to support pupils before they can affect the learning of others.
- Pupils enjoy the varied learning and work-related opportunities they are offered. Staff carefully match these to pupils' interests and aspirations. These could be in academic subjects or vocational such as horticulture or catering. Pupils speak positively about how success in learning has improved their self-confidence and their ability to take on new challenges.
- In conversations with inspectors, pupils said they feel safe, secure and know what to do if they have any concerns. They understand the different types of bullying, including cyber bullying, but point out that it rarely happens at Crookhey Hall.
- A strong emphasis is placed on promoting pupils' physical and emotional well-being. Lessons and small group discussions are successful in extending pupils' understanding of risk in relation to their sexual health, misuse of drugs, alcohol and smoking. Pupils are also encouraged to become physically active, taking advantage of the schools' extensive grounds, helping with the gardening or joining sports clubs.
- Pupils benefit from clear, impartial careers advice and guidance. Staff support pupils with applications for the next steps in their education or training. As a result, pupils make well-informed choices about their next steps.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils who attend the school have complex needs which can result in displays of challenging behaviour. Staff forge extremely positive relationships with pupils. They know when to intervene to calm pupils and minimise disruption. Consequently, for most lessons and in most parts of the school, pupils are well behaved. During the inspection, this was confirmed through classroom visits and observing interactions in corridors around the school.
- Pupils show an enthusiasm for their learning and engage well in most tasks they are given. Punctuality is good and pupils generally come ready to learn. Break and lunchtimes particularly are seen as a social time which is enjoyed by pupils and staff alike.

- Systems of rewards and sanctions are well understood by pupils and support their acceptance of actions resulting in consequences. Pupils gain their reward points through academic effort, behaviour and achieving their personal targets.
- Meticulous records are kept of all behaviour incidents. Leaders use this information to analyse trends and patterns of behaviour over time. The school has a clear understanding of the frequency of different types of behaviour, and which pupils have specific behavioural difficulties.
- Many pupils join the school with a history of poor attendance at their previous schools. Some have not attended regular education for long periods. Staff work hard to ensure regular attendance. They check any unexplained absences, making home visits where necessary. As a result, there are improving the levels of attendance for almost all pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' attainment on entry is significantly below that expected for their age. Most have experienced disruption in their previous schools, including poor attendance, meaning that they have not made the progress expected of them. Many pupils also face barriers to their learning relating to their social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- Once pupils arrive at Crookhey Hall, school leaders act promptly to devise a personalised learning plan and most pupils settle quickly into school routines. With skilled input from the special educational needs and pastoral support teams, pupils soon develop more positive attitudes towards learning. In turn, they begin to succeed both academically and in their vocational courses, resulting in improved self-confidence and self-esteem. 'I didn't realise what I could be good at until I came to this school' is typical of the comments made by pupils who had arrived recently.
- Scrutiny of previous test results, pupils' current work and records of their progress confirm that, over time, pupils are making good rates of progress. Understandably, there is a strong emphasis on improving pupils' basic literacy and mathematical skills across all subjects. Growing success in these areas enables pupils to build on their knowledge and skills and apply their learning across the curriculum.
- Staff use the extra funding provided by the pupil premium effectively so that disadvantaged pupils make good progress in their learning. There is no discernible difference between the progress of these pupils and others. Pupils who are looked after make progress which is at least in line with that of their peers. The most able pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Staff have high aspirations for their pupils. Throughout the year groups, pupils are encouraged to study for qualifications and the school prepares them well for examinations. For example, pupils work towards achieving Functional Skills Certificates, entry-level qualifications, City and Guilds qualifications and GCSEs.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment when they leave. Developing the resilience and interpersonal skills of pupils is a strong feature of the successful transition programme.

Sixth form provision

Good

- There are presently no students in the sixth form. Only a small number of students have attended the sixth form over the past few years.
- Leadership is good and staff ensure that the good progress made by pupils in the secondary department continues in the sixth form. Leaders and staff work hard to provide a curriculum that aims to nurture students' preferences and interests.
- The school places a strong focus on students' academic, vocational and personal and social achievement. Leaders establish clear learning plans for all students and review these regularly throughout the year.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers plan a learning programme for each of the students so that it matches their individual needs. Students follow a range of accredited courses and prepare for external examinations. These can include GCSEs and functional skills in English and mathematics at entry level where necessary. All students also have access to vocational and community-based learning.
- Careers advice, guidance and support is available to enable students to make well-informed decisions about their future. This includes opportunities for students to complete a mock interview and a curriculum vitae. These activities prepare them well for life after the school.
- Procedures for safeguarding students are robust.

School details

Unique reference number	119849
DfE registration number	888/6022
Inspection number	10038839

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	53
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	None
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education Ltd
Chair	Ms Julie Taylor
Headteacher	Lauren Wright
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,870–34,600
Telephone number	01524 792618
Website	www.crookheyhall.com
Email address	reception@crookheyhallschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–23 October 2014

Information about this school

- Crookhey Hall School is an independent day special school for boys and girls. The school is located in a Victorian country house with extensive grounds, near Garstang in Lancashire. It is owned and operated by Acorn Care and Education.
- The current head of school joined the school in September 2017

- Pupils are admitted to full-time education at the school as a result of their social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school is registered to admit up to 68 boys and girls in the age range 10 to 17 years.
- There are currently 53 boys and girls on roll, aged 10 to 17 years. All pupils on roll have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school aims to provide 'boys and girls with an educational experience that will not only extend their academic and vocational social skills and abilities, but will also promote personal growth and help to build self-esteem'.
- In addition to the academic and vocational provision on site, the school works with 4Techmoto in Preston to offer courses for pupils in motor vehicle maintenance.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school's last standard inspection was in October 2014.
- Additional school inspection monitoring reports were published in December 2015 and June 2016.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classes. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with the head of school. Inspectors also observed pupils learning during their practical, vocational courses based in workshops in the school grounds.
- Meetings were held with the chair of governors, headteacher, other school leaders and staff.
- The inspector had a phone conversation with an officer from a local authority that places pupils at the school.
- The inspectors met with pupils both formally and informally. They looked at pupils' work and the school's records of their progress. They also listened to individual pupils as they read.
- There were insufficient responses to generate a report from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors took account of two written responses.
- The inspectors took into account 20 Ofsted questionnaires that were completed by staff.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents provided by the school, including those available on its website. The inspectors checked the school's compliance with the appropriate regulations for independent schools.

Inspection team

Mike Hewlett, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mavis Smith	Ofsted Inspector
John Shutt	Ofsted Inspector

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