

Inspection of Crosshill Special School

Haslingden Rd, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 3HJ

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to Crosshill Special School. They smile as they arrive in the morning and they are eager to start their lessons. Pupils behave exceptionally well throughout the day. They are highly respectful to one another, staff and visitors.

Pupils and students said that school is a happy and safe place because staff work hard to make it that way. Pupils told inspectors that they feel confident that leaders will deal with bullying effectively if it should happen. Pupils appreciate how well staff help them to learn and thrive.

Pupils know that leaders have high expectations of what they can achieve. Pupils understand what they need to do to be successful. They work hard in their lessons. Students in the sixth form are very well prepared for adult life. Most pupils across the school achieve well.

Pupils enjoy a wealth of activities outside the classroom that help them to flourish. These include mini-enterprises to raise funds for local charities. Pupils take leading roles in sports activities across the region. Leaders invite people into school to talk to pupils about the jobs they do. Pupils have exceptional opportunities to develop their talents and interests.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those in the sixth form. Leaders identify pupils' needs well and have ensured that the curriculum meets those needs effectively. For the most part, leaders have thought carefully about what pupils will learn and the order in which they will gain this knowledge. However, the content and order of some aspects of the curriculum subjects in key stage 3 and key stage 4 are less clear. This means that, sometimes, pupils do not build their knowledge as securely as possible.

Teachers use the curriculum plans well to craft activities that help pupils build their learning logically over time. For example, in English, pupils learn about Victorian Christmas traditions before studying 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens.

Teachers are skilled at explaining new subject knowledge clearly. This helps pupils to understand new concepts and ideas. Teachers check pupils' learning and provide support if they are struggling. As a result, most pupils make the progress that leaders expect through the curriculum.

Leaders focus effectively on helping pupils to read. Well-trained staff help pupils to build their phonics knowledge. They give pupils reading books that closely match to their ability. This helps to build pupils' confidence and enables them to read fluently.

The curriculum in the sixth-form provision prepares pupils extremely well for adult life. Leaders have expertly identified an excellent range of subjects and activities that match the needs of the students very closely. Leaders have thought deeply about the content of the curriculum and the order in which students will learn it. Consequently, students are very well prepared to take their next step when they leave the school.

Pupils' behaviour, including that of students in the sixth form, is excellent. Leaders and members of staff have high expectations of pupils' and students' behaviour and attitudes. Staff are very effective in supporting pupils who struggle with self-control. This means that lessons are not disrupted and pupils enjoy their learning.

There is an exceptionally wide range of opportunities for pupils and students to develop their character and their experiences beyond the classroom. For example, pupils make 'care boxes' for people in need in the community, which include food and hygiene products. Some pupils referee local sporting events in the region. Students in the sixth form designed and made flower planters to brighten up the local railway station. Careers education is of high quality throughout the school, including the sixth-form. Pupils make very well-informed choices about their next phase of learning. School leaders share their work on pupils' personal development with other schools across the local area.

Trustees and governors have a strong understanding of their responsibilities. They have robust systems for holding leaders to account. Members of staff who spoke with inspectors said that leaders give them strong support. They stated that leaders do all they can to manage teachers' workload and consider their welfare. They are proud to be part of the team and feel valued by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The processes for identifying pupils who may be at risk of harm are strong across the school, including in the sixth form. Trustees, governors and leaders are clear about their responsibilities and roles. They work well together to safeguard pupils.

Members of staff understand how to keep pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) safe. They provide pupils with information about how to stay safe in different situations, for example when using the internet.

Teams of staff in the school reach out to support families as required. Leaders provide effective support for pupils when they need to do so, including working with outside agencies.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The content and sequencing of some aspects of the key stages 3 and 4 curriculum are not clear enough. This means that pupils do not build their knowledge as well as they should. This slows their progress. Leaders should ensure that they clearly plan and order the knowledge that pupils need across the whole curriculum, so that pupils will know more and remember more.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	146899
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10200819
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	81
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Dot Thomson
Headteacher	Lidia Gardner
Website	www.crosshillblackburn.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has converted to become an academy as part of the Champion Education Trust.
- Sixth-form provision is located approximately 1.2 miles from the main school site in the trust's central offices.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school will relocate to a new site in January 2022 due to increasing pupil numbers.
- The school provides for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, although many have additional SEND needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the chief executive officer of the Champion Education Trust, the headteacher and the assistant headteachers. Inspectors met with trustees and spoke to a governor and representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, citizenship and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors looked at the school's safeguarding policy and related policies and documentation. They checked the school's records of the suitability of staff to work with pupils. They talked with staff and pupils about safeguarding matters, pupils' personal development and pupils' behaviour and attitudes. They looked at a range of other policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and their education. They looked at pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. They also considered responses to the staff questionnaire and the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Martin Hanbury, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mark Quinn

Her Majesty's Inspector

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