

# Inspection of Cross Keys Learning

Suite 1 & 2 the Lead Centre, Dane Valley Road, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 3JJ

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Inspection dates: 27 to 29 September 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**No**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Staff go out of their way to help pupils settle and enjoy school. Many pupils do. Some who have bad experiences of school in the past still struggle, but staff don't give up.

Pupils talk about how patient adults are and how they help them. Bullying is not allowed to become a problem. As one person explained, any issues are 'nipped in the bud' and constructively resolved in a way that builds and strengthens relationships. Breaktimes are an active and enjoyable experience for pupils. They chat and play happily together and with staff.

Promoting pupils' mental health and helping them to manage their own emotions is a focus. Pupils are supported to identify triggers for stress and learn ways of coping with it.

While staff understand pupils well, expectations of pupils' behaviour and conduct are high. The schools 'PROUD points' for showing attributes such as determination help teach pupils about desirable characteristics. However, some pupils could be helped to do even better academically.

The school introduces pupils to new experiences. For example, pupils went on trip to the Royal Opera House. Learning about religions includes visits to different places of worship.

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

Increasingly, new pupils joining the school have bigger gaps in their learning and are further behind compared with those in the past. Last year, leaders decided that the school's existing curriculum was not meeting pupils' needs well enough. They have begun work to address this, but it is at an early stage.

Leaders understand what they are trying to achieve and how to plan an effective curriculum. Sometimes, teachers' decisions about what to teach next are sound, helping pupils to learn well. Pupils mostly develop competence and confidence in mathematics, for example, or learn about rhetorical devices in English.

At other times, the purpose and intended learning in lessons and activities is unclear. Sometimes content does not build strongly on what has come before. This means that pupils either cannot recall what has previously been taught, or they are not shown how to use it to help learn something new.

Attendance for some pupils is excellent. For others, absence rates remain persistently high. Once pupils have settled in, they mostly behave well and work hard. Staff describe with pride the success they have had reengaging school refusers back into full-time education. Adults convey the patience and determination to make

this happen. However, strategies for increasing the attendance of some of the harder-to-reach pupils are not as tight as they could be.

Teachers' academic expectations are not consistently high enough. They are not consistently adept at using questions to support pupils' learning. Sometimes, when pupils show they are capable of more developed answers, they are not given the time, encouragement or prompts to form these. Assessment is not used effectively enough to pinpoint and tackle the gaps in pupils' learning.

Teaching assistants contribute well to supporting pupils in lessons and in providing some of the additional help that they need. The special educational needs coordinator monitors carefully that pupils receive what is set out in their education, health and care plans.

Provision for teaching early reading and phonics is weak. Staff have not been well trained in this vital area. Leaders have not established a consistent, thorough and effective approach to this important work.

In other respects, leaders have considered carefully how best to prepare pupils for their adult lives. They have identified the knowledge and experience pupils need to be well placed to lead fulfilling lives. They have started to thread these things through the curriculum.

Pupils benefit from independent careers advice. Leaders are mindful of pupils' individual interests and talents when planning work experience. The successful transfer of school leavers at the end of Year 11 to new placements is a notable success story.

The pastoral support for pupils is strong. Pupils are given meaningful opportunities to understand how to be responsible, respectful and active citizens. The student council helps choose initiatives. During the inspection, some pupils baked cakes for a MacMillan coffee morning. Pupils have previously taken part in a 'beach clear'. They have basic first-aid training.

Directors and leaders are reflective and keen to improve the school. They identify where things are not working and change course. However, their plans for improvement are not precise enough to help them take action in a timely and targeted way. Similarly, despite director's demonstrable commitment to inclusion, the plan for making different aspects of the school more accessible (the accessibility plan) does not set out specific actions as clearly as it could.

As the school has grown, the leadership capacity to secure and then maintain a good-quality education has not kept pace. Aware of this, directors have recently implemented a new leadership structure, including recruiting new experienced leaders. The very early signs of potential are promising.

There is a positive culture around supporting staff development. However, without a clear and effective underlying improvement plan, staff training needs are not being

identified and targeted well enough. That said, there is a generous allocation of dedicated time for staff to work together, and directors are proactive in keeping in touch with staff views.

Directors are highly committed. They are closely involved with the school on a daily basis. Consequently, the school lacks rigorous governance and accountability for school leaders, especially around the quality of education. Not all of the independent school standards are met. Although provision for relationships and sex education is in place, the need to consult with parents and carers about the policy and publish it on the website has been overlooked. Directors have recently commissioned a new and experienced improvement partner who is already providing helpful feedback and challenge, but it is early days for it to have made a positive difference.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Support staff describe the culture of safeguarding as 'stringent', 'thorough' and 'constant'. The relentless attention paid to safeguarding pupils in this school has successfully created this culture.

Leaders and staff are alert to risks and concerns. They raise issues promptly and in line with the school's policy, which is published on the website. Leaders respond to such concerns with clear thinking, noting their rationale in safeguarding records. However, as the school grows, leaders recognise that their organisation and navigation of records are not as slick as they could be. They are already taking steps to formalise, systematise and improve this.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- The teaching of early reading and phonics is an urgent priority. There is a lack of staff training in this area. The school does not have a rigorous systematic approach to help pupils who are behind catch up quickly and securely enough. Leaders should ensure that they implement a rigorous approach to the teaching of early reading and systematic synthetic phonics and train staff to follow it effectively.
- The curriculum is at an early stage of redevelopment. Staff have started to make decisions about the most helpful and important learning that will help pupils achieve the best outcomes by the time they leave. However, this is not yet formed into a convincing and well-sequenced curriculum. Leaders should continue this work, ensuring that all the necessary leaders and staff have the curriculum and subject knowledge to do a good job.
- The day-to-day quality of education experienced by pupils is not consistently strong enough. Sometimes teachers do not know well enough pupils' existing capabilities to meet their needs or set appropriately high expectations. Not all staff are sufficiently skilful at knowing how to ask questions to extend pupils'

thinking or really check their understanding. Through training and quality assurance as necessary, leaders should ensure that what happens in the classroom is consistently effective in bringing about the learning set out in the redeveloped curriculum.

- Some pupils continue to miss too much school. This increases the likelihood of them falling further behind in their education rather than catching up. Processes around the planning and review of the barriers to improve attendance, or the support and strategies that may help, are not always as tight as they could be. As the quality of education improves and better meets pupils' needs, leaders should double down on their efforts to further improve attendance. This should include working closely with pupils and their families to implement a tight cycle of planning, trying and reviewing carefully targeted strategies.
- Leaders' own evaluations of the school and plans for improvement are unwieldy. They do not pinpoint and prioritise the most important areas for improvement. The plans do not fully reflect leaders' current thinking, so they do not provide them with a reliable or helpful roadmap to the necessary improvement. Sometimes important things are identified and then overlooked. Leaders should ensure that the school has a more sharply focused school improvement strategy supported by the necessary programme of training and development.
- Over time, the school has lacked strong governance, particularly, but not exclusively, around the quality of education. Not all of the independent school standards are met. The school has not consulted on or published its policy with regard to relationships and sex education. Directors should strengthen governance to provide the necessary support, challenge and accountability to school leaders to secure the necessary improvements in a timely manner and ensure that all of the independent school standards are continually met.

## 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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	145574
<b>DfE registration number</b>	886/6149
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10232324
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 17
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	27
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	4
<b>Proprietor</b>	Cross Keys Learning LTD
<b>Chair</b>	Sharon Mount/Stephen Fuller
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nadia Law
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£39,900
<b>Telephone number</b>	01843 602 856
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.crosskeyslearning.com">www.crosskeyslearning.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:headteacher@kms.kent.sch.uk">headteacher@kms.kent.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	26 to 28 February 2019

## Information about this school

- Cross Keys Learning provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, autism spectrum disorder and communication difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Many have missed significant amounts of time in education.
- At the time of this inspection, the school was still running from one site based in Broadstairs, Kent.
- The proprietor body consists of two directors.
- The school's last standard inspection took place in February 2019. As directors have wanted to expand the school, since then it has received three inspections to consider these changes to the school's registration (material change inspections). The material change inspections took place in February 2020, July 2021 and August 2022. The most recent had not been published at the time of this inspection.
- The school does not make use of alternative providers.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the school's first full inspection 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.

- The lead inspector held extensive discussions with the headteacher and both directors of the proprietor body. Inspectors also met other leaders, some of whom joined inspectors as they gathered evidence about the quality of education.
- To help understand the quality of education provided, the inspection team carried out focused activities in relation to certain subjects (deep dives). Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, personal, social and health education and PE. This involved discussing the curriculum in those subjects with leaders and teachers, visiting lessons, speaking with pupils and looking at their work.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documents and records relating to the independent school standards. They explored the school's work to keep pupils safe with leaders and staff.

- The inspection team took account of the views of pupils, parents and staff, including their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Hogarth

Ofsted Inspector



## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

**The school failed to meet the following independent school standards**

### **Part 1. Quality of education provided**

- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor—
  - 2A(1)(e) makes and keeps up to date a separate written statement of its policy with regard to the provision of education as required by each of paragraphs (a) and (b),
  - 2A(1)(f) consults parents of registered pupils at the school before making or revising a statement under sub-paragraph (e), and
  - 2A(1)(g) publishes a copy of the statement on a website and provides a copy of the statement free of charge to anyone who asks for one.

### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school—
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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