

Inspection of Cross Keys Learning

Suite 1 & 2 The LEAD Centre, Dane Valley Road, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 3JJ

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 April 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Cross Keys Learning is an inclusive and nurturing place. Pupils overcome many significant challenges because the school enables them to become resilient and resourceful. Many pupils describe how much they value the ability to be themselves and not feel judged unfavourably because of their special educational needs and/or disabilities. Prior to attending the school, most pupils have not had a successful education experience. Staff sensitively and kindly show pupils how to manage their feelings and emotions positively.

The highly nurturing relationships between staff and pupils enable pupils to achieve well. Pupils aspire to reach the high expectations the school has of them, academically, socially and emotionally. Over time, they reach their goals and accomplish far more than they could ever have hoped for. However, a significant minority of pupils do not attend school often enough and miss out on vital learning.

Pupils take part in activities they have not been able to enjoy before. They happily take part in clubs such as walking, gardening and 'clever hands'. Visits to local supermarkets help them to shop independently, learn how to manage money and practise their communication skills. Pupils are excitedly preparing for their trip to London to visit national landmarks.

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

The proprietor body, staff and the board of governors are unwavering in their commitment to provide pupils with a good quality of education. The proprietor body has worked tirelessly to securely embed the improvements noted at the time of the school's previous progress monitoring visit. They have established rigorous systems to monitor and review all aspects of the school's work. This means that together with the experienced governors, the proprietor body knows well the strengths of the quality of education and what needs to continue to improve further. They carefully check to make sure that the independent school standards (the standards) are met consistently and securely. As a result, the previously unmet standards in part 8 are now fully met. The school fully meets its statutory duties with regard to safeguarding and equality.

Most pupils look forward to their work and enjoy discussing their ideas about the different topics they study. The school's calm and orderly ethos helps them to stay focused. This is because they know the classroom routines and the planned structure of the school day. Parents and carers are highly positive about the school. They appreciate how staff help and care for their children, signposting them to helpful professionals where necessary. Many parents happily shared their stories of how staff had supported their child and family at a difficult time. One parent said, 'Instead of taking baby steps, this school takes the right steps for our children and that works wonders for us.'

The curriculum in all subjects is ambitious, carefully structured and interesting. It

sets out step-by-step the important knowledge and technical vocabulary that pupils should learn at each stage. Reading, writing and mathematics are prioritised to ensure that pupils master the basics. Staff carefully consider pupils' individual starting points, as well as the aspirational outcomes they want all pupils to achieve. Where necessary, the curriculum is also sensibly adapted. This ensures that pupils have the tailored help and support to meet their education, health and care plan (EHC plan) targets. Older pupils study a range of nationally accredited courses suited to their interests and abilities. This means that they achieve suitable qualifications and leave school well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Rightly, developing pupils' love of reading is a priority. There is a diverse and interesting range of books for pupils to enjoy in classrooms and around the school. Staff skilfully guide pupils to make wise book choices to enable them to broaden their knowledge and vocabulary. Staff expertly check for any gaps in pupils' reading and comprehension skills. They make sure that those pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read have tailored support to help them catch up quickly and secure their reading fluency. As a result, some pupils are now reading independently for the first time. As one pupil said, 'Our teachers give us time to revise our phonics. This helps us process our thinking and then reading becomes fun and is no longer a chore.'

However, in some wider curriculum subjects, sometimes staff do not check pupils' understanding before moving on to new content. As a result, pupils do not embed the important knowledge and vocabulary they need to learn and remember. This sometimes limits the progress that pupils make.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They speak positively about the training opportunities provided to develop their skills and expertise. Staff agree that the school is mindful of the particular challenges they face. Each day starts with staff briefings. These meetings are used to discuss individual pupil's needs, circumstances and the day ahead. This regular and informed communication between staff means that they are well prepared to teach and care for pupils.

The school places a strong emphasis on the well-being of its highly vulnerable pupils. Staff manage any incidents of challenging behaviour effectively. They use well-considered strategies to help pupils feel safe and reassured if they become unsettled or anxious. A range of bespoke interventions and therapies blend effectively into everyday routines. As a result, pupils learn to manage their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs well. They practise helpful strategies such as yoga, mindfulness and breathing techniques which help them regulate their behaviour.

Pupils benefit from a well-considered careers programme. They receive regular, useful, unbiased careers advice. A wide range of visitors such as entrepreneurs, the police, the fire service and the vet add to pupils' growing knowledge of the local job market. Staff help pupils to identify the pathway they need to follow to work towards their chosen next steps. This means that pupils are well informed about different career pathways and future study options.

Pupils have a secure understanding of fundamental British values. They are aware of the importance of these in going about their daily life and as they prepare for adulthood. For example, in English, the curriculum includes texts that engage pupils, while increasing their awareness of the world around them. They thoughtfully debate topics such as racism, sexual orientation and hate crime. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and consent. They are taught to understand risky behaviours and the moral, social and legal implications of lifestyle decisions, including inappropriate use of social media. Pupils take part in events and festivals in the village. They celebrate Windrush Day, LGBTQ+ month, Remembrance Day and anti-bullying week. Pupils learn about different religions and cultures. As one pupil said, 'We live in a diverse world and respect everyone for who they are. We don't judge others for how they dress or for their personal beliefs.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects, the curriculum is not taught effectively. This is because staff do not check pupils' understanding well enough and introduce new work too quickly. This limits the progress that pupils make. The school should ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise they need to teach the planned curriculum consistently well.
- A significant minority of pupils are persistently absent from school. This means that they are at further risk of falling behind in their education and do not benefit from the wide range of opportunities and experiences staff provide. The school should continue determinedly with its work to raise pupils' attendance.

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

Unique reference number	145574
DfE registration number	886/6149
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10299241
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cross Keys Learning Limited
Chair	Keith Rumblo
Headteacher	Marvin Simpson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,900
Telephone number	01843 602856
Website	www.crosskeyslearning.com
Email address	enquiries@crosskeyslearning.com
Date of previous inspection	27 to 29 September 2022

Information about this school

- Cross Keys Learning provides full-time education for pupils aged 11 to 17 years. The school is registered for up to 72 pupils. All pupils have complex SEMH needs and autism.
- Pupils are referred to the school by their local authority. All pupils have an EHC plan and many have missed significant amounts of time in education prior to joining the school.
- The school operates across two sites:
 - Suite 1 & 2 The LEAD Centre, Dane Valley Road, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 3JJ
 - The Street, Womenswold, Canterbury, Kent, CT4 6HE
- The proprietor body consists of two directors. There is a governing board providing external challenge and support to the proprietor body.
- This is the first standard inspection since the school was judged to require improvement. The proprietor was required to produce a statutory action plan by the Department for Education (DfE) on 22 November 2022. The action plan was assessed by Ofsted on 20 February 2023 and found to be acceptable by the DfE on 29 March 2023. Ofsted conducted a progress monitoring inspection on 12 July 2023. As a result, the proprietor was required to produce another action plan by the DfE on 30 October 2023. The action plan was assessed by Ofsted on 9 November 2023 and found to be unacceptable by the DfE on 8 December 2023.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with both directors of the proprietor body, the headteacher, senior leaders and teachers. The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair. The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone with an officer from one of the placing local authorities. She also spoke on the telephone with four parents and carers, senior staff from two of the residential care homes where some pupils reside and a representative of the virtual school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during visits to classrooms, during breaktimes and as pupils moved around the school.
- There were very few responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. The lead inspector spoke to some parents during morning drop off and on the telephone. Inspectors also considered the views of staff during meetings with them.
- The lead inspector reviewed and scrutinised a range of documents and policies linked to the standards before and during the inspection. This included the school's curriculum policy, careers programme policy, health and safety policies, the self-evaluation document, the most recent post-Ofsted action plan and the strategic development plan.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

The school's progress in meeting previously failed standards

During the inspection we checked whether the school now meets the independent school standards that it was judged to have failed at its previous monitoring inspection in July 2023.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school now meets the previously failed standards**

The school now meets the following standards

☑ 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;
- 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Caroline Clarke

Ofsted Inspector

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