

# Inspection of a good school: Crowdys Hill School

Jefferies Avenue, Swindon, Wiltshire SN2 7HJ

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Inspection dates:

8 and 9 May 2024

## Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at Crowdys Hill. They are confident that adults look out for them and keep them safe. The school expects pupils to behave well. Pupils know and make effective use of the 'zones of regulation' to keep them calm. They strive to behave well in class and during social times. Pupils understand the importance of respect. They comment on how it is 'okay to be different' and how the school encourages them to be 'the best version' of themselves.

Pupils enjoy school and are keen to learn. The school's mantra, 'learning for life,' shines through. Emphasis is given to a wide range of academic, vocational and life skills. From very different starting points, pupils make strong progress over time and achieve well. However, there are too many pupils who do not attend school regularly which leads to gaps in their knowledge.

Provision for pupils' wider development is strong. Pupils take pleasure in the rich and varied opportunities on offer, including residential trips to Pencelli and Trewen. These activities increase their confidence and develop their leadership skills.

Many parents are delighted with the school. They appreciate the approach that staff take to support their children.

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

The school is ambitious for all pupils to experience success during their time at Crowdys Hill. The curriculum is constructed carefully to meet pupils' individual needs. It is underpinned by developing pupils' skills in English, mathematics and other academic and vocational subjects. Pupils work towards a range of qualifications, including GCSE mathematics, and achieve success.

The school enhances the curriculum significantly with rich and wide-ranging opportunities, such as on the farm, travel training and cooking. These opportunities ensure pupils develop their independence, so they are well equipped for their futures.

Learning in the early years provides children with a strong foundation on which to build. Children start learning how to socialise, cooperate and increase their independence. The focus on communication and language is pivotal. Children learn stories, nursery rhymes and songs in a language-rich environment. Adults are skilful in introducing children to a range of technologies and devices to support their communication. This focus on communication helps to equip children with fundamental skills as they move into key stages 1 and 2.

The school aspires that every pupil will become, at the very least, a functional reader. Staff implement the school's phonic programme securely. They demonstrate the knowledge and skills they need to teach reading effectively. As a result, pupils experience success in their reading, with some older pupils reading as well as their peers in mainstream schools.

Pupils show positive attitudes to their learning. They develop resilience when they face challenges and rarely give up on the task they are doing. However, too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. As a result, these pupils do not build their knowledge well over time and have gaps in their learning. The school is working with families to improve pupils' attendance, but this is not having the desired impact.

Relationships within the school are strong. Pupils are confident that they can talk to their trusted adult if they have any worries. They appreciate the help and support they receive from staff regarding their mental health and well-being. This helps to reduce their anxiety.

Pupils have a voice. They are confident that staff listen to and consider their views, for example in developing the school music festival and 'Crowdys Got Talent.' This gives pupils a sense of purpose and pride.

Pupils understand that the school, 'wants us to be the best version of ourselves and be ambitious.' The school provides helpful careers guidance and support. This ensures pupils successfully secure places at college, in employment or in an apprenticeship. In the sixth form, students are encouraged to be involved in a range of experiences, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Taking part in such activities gives students' confidence and raises their self-esteem.

The personal development programme successfully promotes the school's ethos of acceptance and inclusion. A well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum helps pupils to be kind, thoughtful young people who respect and appreciate diversity. They recognise and accept each other's differences and the importance of not being judgemental.

Governors do not have sufficient oversight of the school's work. They do not know the school's strengths and weaknesses well enough to hold the school to account. Therefore, they do not demonstrate a secure knowledge of the strategic direction of the school.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school keeps pupils safe. They respond promptly to support pupils in need of help. Staff carry out the required checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils. Leaders provide a curriculum that teaches pupils to understand risk, including healthy relationships. Pupils know that adults will listen to them if they have any worries. However, there are examples where safeguarding records lack sufficient detail. Leaders do not have sufficient oversight of the actions taken to support pupils when there are safeguarding concerns.

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

#### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, the information the school records about safeguarding incidents lacks sufficient detail. This risks leaders missing crucial information about pupils' safety. The school needs to make sure that records clearly and consistently demonstrate the action taken in response to safeguarding concerns.
- Governors do not have sufficient oversight of the school's work. This means they do not know the school's strengths and weaknesses well enough to hold the school to account. Governors must increase their level of challenge to school leaders for all aspects of the school's work.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. As a result, they do not build their knowledge well over time and have gaps in their learning. The school needs to ensure that the attendance strategy and its work with parents are effective in ensuring that pupils attend with greater regularity.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2019.

### 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.

## **Further information**

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	126549
<b>Local authority</b>	Swindon
<b>Inspection number</b>	10322235
<b>Type of school</b>	All-through Special
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	306
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	49
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Mick Poole
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kate Higham
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.crowdyshill.swindon.sch.uk">www.crowdyshill.swindon.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	26 and 27 February 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Crowdys Hill is a special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulty and severe learning difficulty.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and staff.

- The lead inspector met with governors, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, English, mathematics, PSHE and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils from across the school read to an adult.
- An inspector visited New College to meet with students in the sixth form.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered key documentation, including school improvement plans and governors' minutes.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. The inspectors met with school leaders to discuss and scrutinise how they respond to behaviour incidents and pupils' attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys, Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text replies.

## **Inspection team**

Jen Southall, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paula Marsh

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Buckton

Ofsted Inspector

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