



# Cramlington Hillcrest School

## Inspection Report

---

**Unique Reference Number** 122383  
**LEA** Northumberland  
**Inspection number** 281248  
**Inspection dates** 3 October 2005 to 4 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Andrew Margerison

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	East View Avenue
<b>School category</b>	Community special		East Farm
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Cramlington, Northumberland
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01670 713632
<b>Number on roll</b>	55	<b>Fax number</b>	01670 737920
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr John Joynton
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 January 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Colin Gibson

---

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11 to 16	3 October 2005 - 4 October 2005	281248

---

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector

## Description of the school

This small special school is situated near the centre of Cramlington, a few miles north of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and caters for up to 72 students. At the time of the inspection, there were 55 students on roll aged 11 – 16 years. All students have statements for special educational need, mainly for moderate learning difficulties, although a significant number have more complex needs including specific learning, and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most students come to school on transport provided by the local authority from Cramlington and nearby towns such as Blythe. A few travel to school from further away. All students are of White-British origin. Almost half the students are entitled to free school meals. Since the last inspection, the school went through a difficult period due to staff absence for various reasons including illness and maternity leave. This meant that, for two years, much of the staffing was temporary. However, that situation has now been resolved and the school has a settled staff. The local authority is currently carrying out a review of special educational needs provision in the area. This may have repercussions for the role of the school in the near future.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Hillcrest is an effective and improving school with some good features. Learners make satisfactory progress and reach satisfactory standards. They achieve well in basic literacy and numeracy. Now that the school has a stable staff, the rate of students' progress is accelerating rapidly, particularly lower down the school. I agree with the school's view of its overall effectiveness. Parents and students, rightly hold the school in high regard. This reflects the good provision it makes for students' care and support, which is the main reason for students' impressive personal and social development. Girls and boys are very happy at school and in many ways thrive on the experiences the school provides for them. The curriculum ensures that students are very well prepared for life after school, although there is more scope for the school to use the local community as focus for activities in lessons. The headteacher, governors and senior managers have a clear vision for the school so it is well placed to improve further. However, at present, their monitoring and evaluation does not pay enough attention to the effect of new initiatives on students' achievement and on teaching and learning. The school provides sound value for money.

not applicable

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation of teaching and new initiatives are sharply focused on achievement.
- Make more use of the local community as a learning resource.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

- Inspection evidence supports the school's view that achievement overall is satisfactory. From often low starting levels, most students make good progress in learning the basic skills of speaking, listening, reading, practical mathematics and science. In 2005, the vast majority of students completing Year 11, left school with external certificates in English, mathematics and science. Most of these students also achieved the ASDAN Bronze Award reflecting their very good personal development. This was despite suffering significant disruption to their learning when they were in Years 7, 8 and 9. In Years 10 and 11, students are achieving well in the areas specified above, however, in writing, information and communication technology (ICT) and other aspects of mathematics and science, their progress over time is only satisfactory. In Years 7, 8 and 9 students are making good progress in their learning overall, although their ability to use and apply their numeracy and ICT skills is not well developed. There is no evidence that girls and boys achieve at different levels, and most reach the targets set for them in their individual plans.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

- The school is too modest in its evaluation of students' personal development. Rather than being satisfactory, it is good. Helping students to become happy, confident and responsible learners is central to the whole life of the school. As a result, the students are well prepared for the next stage of education and for work and adult life. Students understand very well the importance of staying safe and healthy. They are independent, know how to take responsibility and have very good moral and social values. Because there are a few, mainly older, students who, despite the best efforts of the school and local authority, do not come to school regularly enough, attendance is below average. However, most students really enjoy being at school and attend very regularly. In the industrious and purposeful atmosphere, students show very good attitudes to learning and most are keen to do their best. There are a few students who find behaving well all of the time difficult, but the vast majority of students are very well behaved. They relate very well to each other and the adults they are working with. This is the result of the school working hard to foster a strong sense of community and respect for everyone. Students' views are heard and taken seriously. For example, last year students expressed some concerns over bullying at lunchtimes. School managers worked closely with the School Council to make a plan to deal with the problem and, although students say there are still occasional incidents, the situation is much improved.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

- The school quite rightly judges teaching and learning overall to be satisfactory. Some of it is good, particularly in English and mathematics, where students do well. There are also some consistent strengths in teaching across the school. For example, all teachers use questions very well to involve students in discussions and encourage them to offer their ideas and opinions. As a result, students' self-confidence and their speaking and listening skills improve substantially as they move through the school. Teachers also emphasise strongly equipping students with good basic reading and number skills. Most become confident readers of basic texts such as newspapers and magazines, learn to use computers and to solve simple problems using money or time.
- Lessons are well planned. Most begin with teachers telling students the aims of the lesson and end with a short discussion of how well the students think they have learnt. As a result, they are fully involved in lessons and have a clear idea of their progress. Most teaching is brisk and closely matched to students' needs. However, in some lessons, the more able students are not required to extend their understanding and to make use of the skills they have learnt. They are not challenged enough. Teaching assistants are vital members of the teaching team

and make a very significant contribution to the pace of students' learning, particularly those who have specific learning difficulties or problems with their behaviour.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

- The school accurately judges its curriculum to be sound. It is well planned and takes account of the varying needs of the learners. Work in personal, social and health education is a priority. As students move through the school, there is an increasing emphasis on preparing them for their future. Year 11 students have the opportunity to attend a local college to learn practical skills such as motor mechanics and hairdressing and have a three week work placement. However, there are not enough opportunities for students to use their numeracy and ICT skills in other subjects. In addition, not enough use is made of the local area to broaden students' cultural awareness or as the focus for study in subjects such as geography or history. The school has recognised that the range of external qualifications available for the oldest students to work towards is limited. It is seeking ways to broaden that range.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

- An ethos of care and support is at the heart of the school's work and the atmosphere of mutual respect and attention to the personal needs of the learners is one of its strongest features. There are very secure child protection and health and safety arrangements, evident in day-to-day practice. Students are involved in setting and reviewing the clear learning and personal development targets in their individual plans. They know what they are working towards and how well they are getting on. Students say that overall they feel safe and that, if they have a problem or concern, they can talk to any adult in the school and they will be helped. The School Council is an important link between students and staff and has played an important role in helping to move the school forward recently. The school correctly sees this area of its work as a major strength. Parents are overwhelmingly pleased about the standard of care provided for their children.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is aware that it has made only slow progress since the last inspection. This has been because its leadership of the school has been hampered in taking the school forward by considerable staffing problems. These made it necessary for the headteacher to concentrate on the day-to-day running of the school rather than on longer term improvement. Despite this the school's strong ethos of equal opportunity and its commitment to meeting the needs of individual learners were maintained through the difficult

period. Over the last year staffing has stabilised and the school now has a strong senior management team with a clear vision for the future. This team is very well supported by an effective, proactive and well-led governing body which is taking an increasingly prominent role in monitoring the school's progress. Together with senior managers, it has introduced a comprehensive programme of monitoring teaching and other provision. As a result, the quality of teaching, behaviour around school and students' achievement have improved recently. The school improvement plan accurately identifies the immediate priorities for the school, but it fails to set out the effects its proposals are intended to have on students' learning.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
--	-----------------------	--------------

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE  
T 0207 421 6800  
F 0207 421 6707  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Cramlington Hillcrest School  
East View Avenue  
East Farm  
Cramlington  
Northumberland  
NE23 1DY

5 October 2005

Dear Students

Thank you very much for welcoming me to your school this week. I enjoyed talking to you and finding out about all the things you do. You were very polite and friendly and I would have liked to have been able to stay longer.

I am pleased to tell you that I agree with you that your school is doing a good job and that you are helping to make it better all the time. The things I particularly liked were these.

Your behaviour is good and you work hard in lessons.

The school cares for you all equally and looks after you very well.

Teachers make sure you do well in reading, number and in learning how to discuss your ideas with other people.

You are well prepared for leaving school in Year 11 and going on to college or work.

These are the things I have asked your headteacher and the governors to do so as to make your school even better.

Give you more chances to use the village and the local area in your lessons and projects.

Make sure that any changes they make to your school help you learn better.

Thank you for helping me so much with the inspection. I hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers make your school such a happy place to be.

Yours sincerely

Andy Margerison

Lead Inspector

Annex B