

# **Inspection report**

**Cruckton Hall  
Independent special school**

**DfES ref no: 893/6017**

**Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002**

**Dates of inspection: 26 – 29 September 2005**

## **INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY**

### **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

### **Information about the school**

Cruckton Hall is an independent residential school for 90 boys aged 9 - 19 years. Occasionally younger pupils are admitted, subject to the local authority gaining Department for Education and Skills (DfES) dispensation. Residential placements are provided either on a term-time basis or 52 week basis. The majority of the boys have diagnoses of Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. A significant number have additional related learning and emotional difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and are referred by local authorities across the country. At the time of the inspection there were 77 full-time pupils on roll aged 8 - 19 years. Those above compulsory school age attend local further education colleges. Most of the educational and residential facilities are located on a very attractive and spacious rural campus some five miles from Shrewsbury. Two of the accommodation units including provision for the oldest students are located in Shrewsbury itself. The provision is subject to annual inspections by Commission for Social Care (CSCI), the most recent of which took place in November 2004.

Cruckton Hall School aims to provide, *'a wide range of specialist services individually tailored to meet the needs of boys who have experienced difficulties at home, school or in social situations.'* This is to be achieved through, *'a well established therapeutic regime of quality education and care.'*

### **Summary of main findings**

Cruckton Hall School is a good school with a number of very good and excellent features. It meets successfully its stated aims. It provides very good care for pupils and some very good teaching. Comprehensive assessments monitor the pupils' progress effectively. There is a clear ethos of promoting and celebrating achievement and progress by the pupils. The residential provision is of very high quality and provides an excellent standard of care and support for the pupils and students who are resident in term time or on a 52 week basis. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. The school is very well led by the headteacher who has the support of a strong multi-disciplinary team. They know their pupils well and strive to provide for their differing requirements. The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, which is suitable for the needs of pupils.

### **What the school does well:**

- it provides opportunities for pupils to make good and often very good progress, which is reflected in their academic achievement;

- it provides good teaching and support and has effective systems in place for assessing pupils' attainment together with useful record-keeping procedures;
- its very good quality accommodation and resources successfully support the pupils' learning and development of their independence;
- it provides effectively for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and emotional development, with excellent provision for their welfare, health and safety;
- its multi-disciplinary team, together with visiting professionals have high but realistic expectations of the students who respond positively and are keen to improve their achievement;
- it has very good relationships between staff and pupils; incidents of challenging behaviour are dealt with effectively so that these do not disrupt teaching and learning.

**What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations:**

- meet fully the requirements in relation to the welfare, health and safety of pupils as set out in section 3 regarding attendance, registers and off-site activities.

**What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002**

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA, the school should:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

**Next Steps**

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- develop more clearly defined roles for the senior management team in order to increase delegation;
- ensure greater consistency of curriculum planning and subject coordination;
- increase the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance teaching and learning and to support pupils' work across the curriculum.

# **COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION**

## **1. The quality of education provided by the school**

### **The quality of the curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum is good. The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, which is suitable for the needs of pupils. It is successful in enabling pupils to achieve well in a wide range of externally accredited courses, including national tests and General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. Personal and social education is taught well across the 24 hour curriculum. Opportunities are taken to discuss relevant issues in assembly, at handover meetings or on an individual basis, as the need arises. The school has a very strong ethos on valuing its pupils. The staff work hard to promote their self-esteem and confidence, so that they are better equipped to meet the demands of adult life. An active school council with pupil representatives meets weekly to discuss issues of concern to the school. It has had a positive impact on issues such as healthy eating, recreational activities and fund raising. Pupils are encouraged effectively to take responsibility for themselves and the environment by participating in activities such as recycling and the anti-bullying programme. They are also encouraged to be as independent as possible in their own personal organisation such as keeping their rooms tidy and travelling. The off-site residential facilities at Harlescott and Belvedere provide excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their independence in a more adult environment.

Whilst there are policies and schemes of work in place for subjects, there is too much variation in the quality of planning within subjects and across the school. Schemes of work do not always incorporate assessment opportunities or clear learning objectives. Co-ordination of individual subjects is underdeveloped. However, the school intends to establish a curriculum management team to oversee curriculum development and bring about greater consistency of planning.

A strong feature of the school is the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer to the pupils. There are a wide variety of sports, such as badminton, basketball, computer club, chess, arts, and music and drama activities. Pupils participate in these during evenings and weekends. Opportunities also exist for pupils to participate in summer camps, local outdoor activities and trips to France. The school makes good use of visiting professionals, including peripatetic music teachers and drama workshop specialists to enrich the curriculum experiences of pupils.

There are good links with a range of colleges, which pupils aged 14 - 19 can attend. These include opportunities for agricultural and technical courses to be followed. A few pupils attend a sixth form college where subjects at advanced level (A-levels) are studied. The school has established links with some local mainstream schools and this has enabled a number of pupils to be successfully integrated back into mainstream provision.

The school offers a wealth of work experience opportunities. Pupils participate in work experience placements at the school, in the local community, or nearer their own home. The breadth of experiences and providers ensure that the individual interests of pupils can be well supported.

The very good working relationships between the residential and educational staff are strength of the school. Effective handover meetings take place each day; these aid good communication and consistency of practices. The high quality residential provision and supportive staff ensure pupils are supported with their homework and extra-curricular activities. The school is working to become an accredited centre with National Autistic Society, which offers support to schools to ensure that needs of pupils on Autistic spectrum disorder are met appropriately.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment**

The quality of the teaching is good overall and in almost half of the lessons seen teaching was very good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. The most significant feature of the very good teaching is the high expectations teachers have about what pupils can achieve. This has a very positive impact on their learning. Individual lessons are planned in a variety of ways. In the most successful lessons teachers make pupils aware of the aims of the lesson at the start; they use a good range of strategies, including ICT or practical tasks, to ensure the aims are met. They end with a helpful evaluation or summary of what has been learned. In spite of their histories of disrupted education and, for some, their initial resistance to learning, the majority of pupils show a strong desire to learn. They enjoy their lessons and are proud of their achievements. In a history lesson, for example, Year 11 pupils were proud to talk about their individual course work and research into the development of castles in Britain. Two other Year 11 pupils demonstrated a degree of fluency in French by writing a poem and then translating it into English.

There is a wide range of subject knowledge and expertise among the staff. Teachers demonstrate very good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They are particularly aware of the needs of pupils on the autistic spectrum and of the teaching methods required to meet these. Teaching assistants know the pupils well and are an important part of the staff team. They provide valuable continuity and support for pupils who are taught different subjects by different teachers. Specialist teaching takes place in most subjects and effective use is made of visiting professionals, including speech therapists, to enhance pupils' learning. Younger pupils who are class based are taught by a primary practitioner and have access to many of the specialist resources. Teaching assistants frequently offer well-focused individual help both in class and on a withdrawal basis when required. In all lessons, there is a strong emphasis on promoting pupils' literacy and oracy skills to assist individuals achieve their full potential.

Relationships between adults and pupils are very good overall and based on mutual respect. Staff treat all pupils fairly and sympathetically and incidents of challenging behaviour are managed skilfully. The management of such behaviour is achieved in a calm, consistent manner which is highly effective. The very good quality accommodation and good resources for learning contribute well to teaching and learning. The resources are appropriate to the ages of the pupils and are carefully

chosen to meet their particular needs. However, teachers do not make sufficient use of ICT to support pupils' learning.

The school has a good range of effective procedures for assessing pupils' achievement and progress. External assessment through national tests and GCSE examinations show that many of the boys achieve standards which compare favourably with their peers in mainstream schools. Many go on to further education colleges and university placements. Regular assessment occurs in subjects such as English and mathematics and written work is marked regularly. Class groups are small and as a result pupils often receive daily feedback in class about their performance in individual subjects. Assessments are also used effectively to inform behaviour and care plans which span the 24 hour curriculum. Regular inter-disciplinary staff meetings are held to discuss the progress of each individual pupil. Accurate records are kept which can be shared with visiting professionals who work with the pupils and their parents. Parents are kept fully informed about their children's progress through Annual Review meetings, parent evenings and through end of year reports which provide information about achievement and progress in all the subjects taught.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## **2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The school makes good provision overall for the pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development and very good provision for their social development. It is successful in developing their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. This is aided by a programme of personal, social and health education which spans the 24 hour curriculum. Pupils are given opportunities to explore issues such as behaviour, relationships, and feelings, as well as guidance on how to care for themselves. Lessons in citizenship provide pupils with an awareness and knowledge of public institutions and services and care of the environment. Moments of reflection during assembly and prayers, combined with visits to local places of worship, provide good opportunities for students' spiritual experience and development

Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong clearly and effectively through the consistent application of the school's approach to the management of behaviour. Social development is promoted effectively through the taught curriculum and the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Opportunities are provided for pupils to work co-operatively in groups within the 24 hour curriculum. Meal times for example, are good social occasions and reflect a family setting where staff eat with pupils. Self-service arrangements encourage pupils to make choices and select from a varied menu. Healthy eating has a high priority and during this visit many pupils chose a salad for their midday meal.

Pupils are encouraged to take part in initiatives in the wider community including football competitions, shopping trips and fund-raising activities for charities. There are regular educational visits to historical sites and museums. Pupils are taught to appreciate and look after their environment. A programme of recycling has begun

and every classroom has responsibility for recycling of its waste. A wide variety of summer camps are arranged to suit the needs of various groups. Pupils are allocated placements based on the degree of independence and self-confidence. Activities to promote team building, self-esteem and self-confidence are an integral feature of these experiences. Lessons in English religious education, art, music, history and French lessons provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn about their own culture and the faiths, beliefs and cultures of other nations. The pupils have opportunities to study other cultures through the programme of international visits, where they learn about the customs, food and language of other countries. The school endeavours to prepare the pupils effectively for life in a multi-cultural society.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

### **3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**

The provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is excellent. The school takes bullying very seriously and pupils have a number of ways they can raise their concerns. The school council is an effective way of pupils raising issues of concern to them. The level of pupil supervision is very high and this ensures that incidents are kept to a minimum. The ethos of the school is important in ensuring that pupils are always respected and valued. The school met or exceeded all the standards in the most recent CSCI report; this is a good indication of the high quality care that the school provides.

Although the school has a policy on off-site educational activities, it does not fully reflect the latest DfES guidance. However, thorough risk assessments are carried out for off-site activities to ensure the maximum safety of pupils. There is a comprehensive behaviour policy, which sets out how positive behaviour is promoted, and what sanctions are acceptable. Where sanctions are imposed, records of these incidents are logged. The school does not ensure that school registers are maintained on a daily basis, and reasons for absence are not always recorded correctly. Currently the school does not have an action plan to reflect how it will meet the requirements of DDA.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

No.

*Although the school meets almost all the regulations, in order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *amend the existing policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school, (paragraph 3(2)(c));*
- *ensure that daily attendance registers are maintained, (paragraph 3(9)).*

***What does the school need to do to comply with the DDA?***

*In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA the school should:*

- *devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.*

#### **4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The school is owned by the Young Options Ltd. It has very effective administrative systems in place to ensure the suitability of newly appointed staff on all its sites. Appropriate checks have been made prior to the appointment of all adults employed by the school who are in contact with pupils. Thorough checks are carried out, before appointments are confirmed, on the authenticity of references, medical checks and qualifications. Sufficient and suitably qualified staffs are available to meet the needs of the pupils in all settings. Induction procedures for newly appointed staff are effective.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

#### **5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation**

The quality of the accommodation is very good. The residential accommodation is of a very high standard and contributes greatly to developing the personal and social development of pupils. The off-site residential provision at Harlescott and Belvedere is excellent in promoting the independence of pupils and preparing them for their next stage of life. The accommodation has ample flexible options, so that the right amount of support can be tailored to pupils' needs. The residential accommodation is attractive, well maintained and provides a homely environment.

The educational accommodation is also of a very high standard. There are specialist facilities for all aspects of the curriculum including, science, ICT, design and technology, art, physical education (PE), drama, music and art. These facilities greatly enhance the delivery of teaching and the curriculum. Pupils with behavioural difficulties or specific learning difficulties can receive individual support in a separate building. Classrooms are of a suitable size for the small number of pupils in each group. Classrooms are well equipped, although there is only one interactive whiteboard at present in the school. The number on roll has expanded over the years and it is now difficult for the whole school and staff to gather together in one area. There are extensive outside grounds, which are immaculately maintained. Pupils use the outdoor facilities both for PE and for a range of extra-curricular activities. Overall the campus is very attractive and provides excellent facilities for both residential and educational purposes.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

#### **6. The quality of information for parents and other partners**

The provision of information provided by the school is of good quality. Photographs enhance the readable prospectus and all the requirements of registration are met. The prospectus gives information on the curriculum, child protection arrangements and the publication of the previous year's pupil performance results, and generally gives a helpful picture of the school. Parent responses to the questionnaire are

largely very positive. They indicate that they are very satisfied with the school and feel it is well run. They feel able to approach the school with any concerns that they may have. The quality of reports to parents, carers and local authorities are good and give a comprehensive picture of how pupils are progressing in each area of the national curriculum, as well as their overall personal and social development.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## **7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints**

The school has a clear policy for handling complaints, which meets fully the requirements of the regulations. Alongside initial informal measures, there are well-structured formal procedures by which complaints can be considered fairly and objectively. The complaints panel includes an independent member of the local community.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Cruckton Hall		
DfES Number:	893/6017		
Type of school:	Special		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	8 -19 years		
Gender of pupils:	Boys		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 77	Total: 77	
Number of boarders:	Boys: 77	Total: 77	
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 77	Total: 77	
Annual fees (boarders):	£73,000.00 - £156,000.00		
Address of school:	Cruckton, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY5 8PR		
Telephone number:	01743 860206		
Fax number:	01743 860941		
Email address:	pdm@cruckton.com		
Headteacher:	Paul Mayhew		
Proprietor:	Trevor Price		
Reporting Inspector:	Sheila Boyle		
Date of inspection:	26 - 29 September 2005		

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