



Crispin School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123873
Local Authority Somerset
Inspection number 292825
Inspection date 14 November 2006
Reporting inspector Peter Griffiths HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Church Road
School category	Community		Street
Age range of pupils	11–16		BA16 0AD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01458 442714
Number on roll (school)	1132	Fax number	01458 447955
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	A Morrison
		Headteacher	Paul James
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2006		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–16	14 November 2006	292825

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Crispin is a popular, over-subscribed school. It has specialist technology college status. The proportions of students with learning difficulties and with a statement of special educational need are low. The school has relatively few students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school serves socially and economically diverse communities across the town and surrounding countryside. Rural isolation is a factor that affects a substantial minority of the students.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Crispin is an outstanding school. The staff, students and parents think so and the inspection team agrees. A unique feature is its superb education for sustainable development. As a result students leave with an excellent understanding of the importance of this issue both locally and globally. There are also very high levels of student participation in school and community life. The school council is consulted about school developments and when appointing staff as their views are greatly valued. These are two examples of the ways the school develops outstanding personal skills in its students. The outstanding leadership and management displayed by the senior leadership team (SLT) ensure that these unique features have been successfully developed. The SLT sets the tone and direction for the school by focusing on the key objective of improving standards through ensuring all students can develop personally and academically within a caring and supportive environment. Achievement is good and standards are above average, but standards are still rising in response to the improvements the SLT has made, for example, to the now excellent curriculum. The school has an excellent capacity to improve further. Students are extremely well cared for and academic guidance is consistently effective.

Teaching is good. Teachers' good subject knowledge and detailed planning lend confidence to their teaching, which proceeds at a cracking pace, readily engaging the students. If a student does not behave as they should, in the majority of lessons they are challenged and the learning of others is not affected. Assessment and marking of students' work is thorough and academic data is used very effectively. Middle leadership plays a key part in ensuring that the school's monitoring and evaluation processes are outstanding. With very effective support from the SLT, their evaluations of departmental provision and standards contribute to the excellent benchmark document which analyses students' attainment and assists with target setting. Accompanied by excellent learning support and academic guidance, students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.

Throughout the school, the progress of all students is good. In Year 9, students' results in English, mathematics and science were above national averages. In the GCSE examinations, the percentage of students attaining five or more higher GCSE grades was also above the national average, but particularly significant was the fact that for most students their higher GCSE grades included mathematics and English. The school's status as a specialist technology college has had a positive impact on standards in a range of subjects, not just technology, and all targets have been met. Information and communication technology (ICT) is now extremely well used to improve students' learning.

The overwhelming majority of students enjoy school. As well as stimulating lessons the school provides students with the opportunity to participate in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits. Students and their parents are grateful for the opportunities provided and this is reflected in their exceedingly high levels of involvement in, for example, drama and music. The popularity of the school has led

to it being oversubscribed. As a consequence, the school is experiencing difficulties in accommodating students, especially in specialist areas such as science.

The impact of Crispin School on other providers is also outstanding. Within the Bridgwater Excellence Cluster it has been particularly effective in helping others to develop their policies and practices. As a Leading Edge School it has had a significant impact through both its primary support programme and its work on education for sustainable development. The school has formed excellent working partnerships that have contributed to the achievement and well-being of its students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Seek to resolve the difficulties arising from the inadequacies of its specialist accommodation.
- Ensure that the behaviour management techniques developed by the school are used consistently by all staff.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students' attainment on entry to the school is average, although the proportion attaining above Level 4 is below the national average. In both Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations, standards are continuing to improve. During Years 7–9, all students made good progress. Their attainment in English, mathematics and science continues to be above the national averages. In mathematics and English, significantly more students than average achieved at Level 6 or higher. Results also show that in Years 10 and 11, all students, including those with learning difficulties, also made good progress. The percentage of students attaining five or more higher GCSE grades was above the national average, with a very high proportion gaining five or more GCSE higher grades that included mathematics and English. When achievement in a subject has been less secure, the school has taken active measures that have been successful in improving standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Throughout their time at school, students make outstanding progress in developing the personal skills and attributes that help them to develop into thoughtful and mature young people. They know how to keep themselves safe and healthy and through the school council have played a key role in improving the range of healthy foods available in the school. The vast majority of students enjoy their time at Crispin School.

Attendance rates are good. The behaviour and attitude of the overwhelming majority of students are good. If a student's behaviour is challenging, flexible strategies are in place to ensure that the school addresses the issue. For example, the 'Return to Learning Centre' is very effective in reducing fixed-term exclusions as well as giving students confidence in understanding what is meant by acceptable behaviour. Students'

spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The concept of Education for Sustainable Development permeates the ethos of the school and students develop an excellent understanding of the importance of this issue at both a local and a global level. Students' preparation for their future economic well-being is outstanding. A more extensive and effective programme of Enterprise Education has been introduced at Key Stage 4, with enhanced opportunities for students to develop appropriate skills.

Through the year, school and sports councils and a wide range of other activities means student participation in the life of the school and community is outstanding. The School Council is always consulted about school developments and staff appointments as their views are considered to be central to decision making in the school. Significant numbers of students contribute to the many charitable fund-raising events which take place in school. Participation in a large number of extra-curricular activities such as music, plays, sport, dance and drama is very high.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Here, the planning is effective and the work is well paced, with very real challenges that ensure a high level of involvement of the students. The use of paired and group work and the inclusion of practical activities also ensure that students make good progress. The overwhelming majority of students respond well in lessons. Occasionally, a student may be reluctant to participate or to behave as they should. In most cases, the student is appropriately challenged and the learning of others is not compromised. Occasionally teachers do not use the behaviour management techniques agreed by the school, and some time is wasted.

Teachers make good use of assessment data when planning how to meet the needs of individual students. Teaching is well differentiated. Students with specific learning difficulties receive very good help from the learning support assistants. Assessment and marking of students' work are frequent and regular. There is exceptional practice with regard to Assessment for Learning, which is led by an Advanced Skills Teacher. In this area, the Leading Edge work with other schools strengthens the school's own practice still further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding. At both Key Stages the school has been very effective in putting into place alternative curricular arrangements for students with differing needs. For example, the work-related learning programme and curriculum support at Key Stage 4 maintain the interest and engagement of some of the school's most challenged and challenging students, who might otherwise have been excluded. Extra challenge and opportunity are provided for students of the very highest calibre

and for those who are gifted and talented. Provision for citizenship and personal, social and health education is considerably enhanced by the focus on global citizenship and education for sustainable development.

The extensive range of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits is outstanding, as is the level of student participation.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care and guidance are outstanding. All requirements for care, health and safety are met. Excellent provision is made for students with specific needs and for those who have been identified as being gifted and talented. Health and safety routines and risk assessments are all fully in place. Child protection procedures are clear. The pastoral system is exceptionally effective and there are very good systems for monitoring attendance and behaviour.

The use of academic data is excellent. Learning support is very strong and academic guidance through marking and assessment is consistently effective in ensuring that individuals know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Students contribute to the care of others. For example, the 'Oi listen 'ere club' is particularly successful in enabling peer mentors to support their more vulnerable fellow students. Students believe that they are given very clear guidance on healthy lifestyles and what it means to be a good global citizen. The quality of tutor support and careers guidance, including choice of college courses, is very good and much valued by the students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The senior leadership team (SLT) works extremely well together and gives clear direction to the work of the school. While the SLT continues to focus on its key objectives of improving standards within a caring and supportive environment, it has also ensured that the school's unique characteristics with regard to education for sustainable development and student participation are well supported. The outstanding quality of the SLT has been a significant factor in the smooth integration of new members into the team. All new appointments have brought in experiences and qualities which have further strengthened the team. Middle leadership is good and often outstanding. The school has put in place very effective procedures for encouraging distributed leadership, which includes fixed-term secondments of middle leaders on to the SLT.

The school's monitoring and evaluation processes are outstanding. Self-evaluation by the SLT is strong and decisions are translated into action. Improvements to the curriculum, for example, have had a significant impact this year on improving the achievement of lower-attaining and challenging students. Improvements to the use of ICT in all subjects have strongly contributed to raising standards in ICT itself. Subject

leaders are very effective in monitoring, evaluating and then reporting on their departments. The autumn reviews of exam results and consequent strategies for improvement contribute to the excellent benchmark document, which analyses students' attainment and assists with target setting both at subject and whole-school levels.

As a high-attaining school, Crispin has joined the Bridgwater Excellence Cluster with the aim of sharing good practice. It has been particularly effective in helping others to develop their policies and their provision for gifted and talented students. Similarly, as a Leading Edge School, it has been extremely effective in its work with other schools in areas such as primary science and design and technology, gifted and talented provision, education for sustainable development and the promotion of independent learning.

As a specialist technology college, the school has become a technologically rich environment in which students benefit from easier access to ICT to aid their learning. Improved resources have enabled the school to develop closer relationships with the local community, partner primary and secondary schools, and the neighbouring FE College. The school's links with outside agencies are excellent and it benefits considerably from being part of a community campus.

The Governing Body is proactive and supportive whilst being appropriately challenging. Governors are extremely well informed about school development and are making a significant contribution to school improvement.

Being oversubscribed has brought with it issues of buildings capacity. In particular the school is finding it difficult to accommodate students, especially in specialist areas such as science laboratories, ICT and technology rooms. Despite these difficulties, it is a very effective and successful school that provides excellent value for money.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. However, first, I would like to thank you for your openness and co-operation during our visit. We enjoyed talking with you and valued your comments and opinions. We were impressed by your maturity.

- We agree with your views that your school is an outstanding school.
- The headteacher and those with responsibility have your best interests in mind. They work tirelessly to ensure that you are successful in all that you do.
- You, through the year and school councils and other groups, play an important part in improving the school and your ideas are welcomed and acted upon.
- You enjoy coming to school and participate well in lessons and the out-of-school clubs and activities.
- You achieve well, particularly when teachers present the work in ways that meet your needs.
- Another reason for your success is that you are extremely well cared for.
- The vast majority of you and your parents are very happy with the school and all that it offers.
- Becoming a specialist technology college has contributed to the higher standards you are achieving and has improved the resources, including those for ICT. Your school needs to:
 - Ensure that the approaches it has developed to ensure all students behave well in lessons are used consistently by all staff.
 - Seek to resolve the difficulties arising from the inadequacies of its specialist accommodation.