

Inspection report

St Crispin's School

Independent school

DfES ref no: 856/6000

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 9 - 12 October 2006

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

St Crispin's is a non-selective independent day school that provides education for 120 pupils aged between 3 and 16 years. It is housed in two large Victorian houses situated in the Stoneygate area of Leicester. The majority of pupils travel some distance to attend the school. The school admits pupils with a wide range of ability and some who find it difficult to succeed in larger settings. A significant proportion of the pupils are identified as having specific learning difficulties. The school is CReSTeD registered which means that the specific needs of Dyslexic children are addressed. There are more boys than girls.

The school broadly follows the National Curriculum. The school motto is '*respice finem*' ('look to the end'). This guides the school in seeking to develop good standards in both academic and personal development by the time the pupils leave at 16.

Summary of main findings

St Crispin's School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The school largely meets its aims as pupils are achieving well and have good personal and social skills by the time they leave the school. It has a number of strengths: it is a harmonious community of learners who behave well and demonstrate good attitudes to their learning; it gives a high priority to providing the best care and welfare for the pupils and it enables the older pupils to achieve well. This is due to the good teaching they receive in Key Stages 3 and 4. Teaching is less effective in Key Stages 1 and 2 due to weaknesses in assessment and planning.

The curriculum is satisfactory and provides the pupils with a broad and balanced range of experiences in school and some links to the world of work. The provision for pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall with strengths in cultural and moral development. The pupils feel safe in school and enjoy their time at St Crispin's.

The school's leaders have a very strong commitment to provide the best possible education for the pupils. They have recently been successful in making appointments that have strengthened the teaching and they have considerably improved the internal fabric of the building in recent years. School policies and procedures are good. Some of the systems to check on the quality of teaching and learning are underdeveloped. Consequently, the school is not always providing the necessary support to teachers to improve aspects of teaching, learning and assessment practices in the school.

What the school does well:

- it looks after the pupils well and gives a high priority to their care and welfare in all it does;
- behaviour is good; the pupils have positive attitudes to their work and most enjoy coming to school. Staff know the pupils well and relationships between pupils and staff are good;
- teaching of the older pupils is good and this enables these pupils to make good progress; and
- there are good systems to ensure that pupils are safe in school.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and assessment as indicated in section 1 of this report; and
- improve the quality of some of the reports to parents as specified in section 6.

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.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum and it enables pupils to participate in an appropriate range of externally accredited courses, including national tests and General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. A small number of the older pupils have opportunities to complete vocational courses through links with Leicester College. The school provides additional support through a visiting specialist for pupils who are identified as being dyslexic.

At all key stages, the subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, along with religious education. A programme of personal social and health education (PSHE) is taught in all year groups and older pupils have lessons on citizenship and careers guidance.

Long-term planning takes appropriate account of national guidance including the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Schemes of work are in place for all subjects and they inform teachers about what should be covered in each year group. However, there is insufficient support, particularly in the Key Stages 1 and 2, to guide classroom practice and to help teachers with planning, identification of appropriate learning objectives, teaching methods and resources. Co-ordination of individual subjects is underdeveloped.

The school gives appropriate attention to the development of basic skills and there are regular opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT). Specialist individual tuition is available in music, ballet, German, Arabic, Punjabi and elocution during the school day.

The taught curriculum is supported through a range of extra-curricular activities which include weekly clubs for debate, music and craft. However, at present not all pupils have access to these clubs. Pupils also take part in off-site trips which include visits to places of historical and geographical interest and visits to museums, theatres and art galleries. Visits to places of worship take place as part of the religious education and PSHE programme. From time to time, pupils can participate in a day trip to France. The school makes good use of visiting speakers from national organizations such as the air force, police and fire service and other professionals, such as peripatetic music teachers, to enrich the experiences of pupils. Older pupils participate in work experience placements.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching in the school is satisfactory overall. It is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 but there are weaknesses in aspects of the teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2. The weakness mainly relate to assessment, planning and time management.

In the lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4 the teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use this well to make the work relevant and interesting for the pupils.

The teachers are clear about what is to be learned in the lessons and the pupils are generally well informed about their targets for improvement. The pupils are becoming involved in their own assessment and although they work a long day they show a strong commitment to their learning. The teachers build successfully on previous learning and time is well used at the start of lessons to allow discussion and reflection on how today's lesson fits into the bigger picture. Homework is set regularly and prep sessions are used well to provide good opportunities for support and revision. Behaviour is well managed and the teachers are successful in promoting good attitudes to learning.

In Key Stages 1 and 2 the teachers are well informed about the personal needs of the pupils and this ensures they settle well when they arrive at the school. The teachers make good use of the ICT suite to support learning. The pupils enjoy lessons which are lively and move at a good pace. In too many lessons, however, the same work is set for all the pupils when some are capable of doing more. The way in which the school is using published materials and work sheets does not promote good progress. All pupils are often given the same work sheet to complete or use the same work books regardless of their ability. The teachers regularly mark the pupils' work but sometimes the pupils are not provided with enough information on what they need to do to improve. Time is not always used well; on occasions the younger pupils are sitting for too long, which results in restlessness and inattention.

The quality of lesson planning is variable across the school. Some learning objectives are too general and do not reflect the ability range in the class or relate sufficiently to the particular lesson. Consequently, it is sometimes difficult for the teachers, or the pupils, to assess what progress is being made. Apart from the monitoring of newly qualified teachers, the systems for checking on the quality of teaching are weak. Teachers are not regularly observed and therefore they do not know how well they are doing and how they might improve. The management team are not sufficiently aware of where action is needed to address weaknesses in the teaching and learning.

The school has a satisfactory system of half-yearly testing that enables it to check on the progress the pupils are making over time. The systems for day-to-day assessment are underdeveloped in the school. Some teachers are not tracking progress carefully enough to ensure pupils are always set work that stretches them.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *ensure that lessons are well planned, effective teaching methods and suitable activities are used and class time is managed wisely, particularly in Key Stage 1 and 2 (paragraph 1(3)(c));*

- *ensure teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 1(3)(d)); and*
- *ensure there is a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and that the information from such assessment is utilised to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g)).*

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

The school makes good provision for the pupils' moral and cultural development and the provision for their spiritual and social development is satisfactory. The provision is enhanced by an effective system of pastoral care and good links with parents. As a consequence, pupils increase in self-knowledge and self-confidence while they are at the school.

Pupils' social development is adequately promoted within the school. Playtimes, trips to the local sports centre, after-school prep sessions and weekly clubs are good social occasions where pupils of different ages meet informally. Older pupils attend a range of work experience placements in the community, and some inter-school sports competitions take place from time to time. Some lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to work cooperatively in groups but this is not consistent practice in the school.

Pupils' spiritual awareness is promoted through subjects such as music, science and religious education. There are no identified times for reflection or for acts of collective worship. Some lessons provide opportunities for reflection on ideas, experiences and moral issues and the school's code of conduct is clearly understood by pupils and applied consistently by staff. The house system encourages pupils to show loyalty and commitment to their team and gives older pupils responsibilities as prefects and house captains. The majority of pupils feel that they are treated fairly by staff and that they can approach staff if they have a problem. A significant minority of the older pupils, however, feel that they are not given enough independence by the school. They also report that they consider their views are not heard and that they have little influence on the way the school is run.

Opportunities for pupils' cultural development are well integrated within the subjects of the curriculum. Lessons in history, for example, inform pupils about the rich diversity of British culture. In religious education, pupils learn about the customs, beliefs and festivals of other cultures as well as their own. Other activities which enhance cultural awareness are lessons in French and German and the use of visiting speakers to assemblies, including the parents of pupils who come from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

There is good provision for the welfare, care and safety of the pupils. The school has developed and implemented a comprehensive set of policies which support welfare, health and safety. The headteacher and the staff at the school know the pupils well and the pupils say they are able to approach the staff should they be feeling unhappy at school. Some of the older girls would like the school to appoint female prefects or have a female mentor that they can speak to in confidence. Child protection procedures are securely in place. The behaviour policy is clear and results in good behaviour in school. The pupils are aware of the rewards and sanctions applied by the school and feel they are fair.

The admission and attendance registers are completed conscientiously and there is an effective system in place to monitor lateness. Attendance is good because the pupils generally enjoy school and like being there. Arrangements for looking after pupils who are feeling unwell or who have had an accident are secure. The school has a number of staff who are appropriately trained in First Aid. The school undertakes the necessary risk assessments when the pupils are taken out of school, and the school building is carefully monitored to identify and rectify any possible hazards. Good attention is given to checking the fire appliances and regular fire drills take place. A fire risk assessment has been carried out and approved by the Fire Service.

The school has considered the ways in which the building can be adapted to improve accessibility but has yet to draw up a plan of action to address this.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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 staff are suitably qualified and offer a good range of subject expertise to support the curriculum. The school has rigorous recruitment procedures that ensure all staff undergo proper vetting prior to them taking up appointment, including checks with the Criminal Record Bureau.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The accommodation is satisfactory. The proprietors have undertaken a programme of refurbishment to the school that has improved the accommodation. The classrooms are of a reasonable size and the furniture is suitable for the age of the pupils. Many of the classrooms are enhanced by colourful and informative displays of pupils' work. There is a range of specialist rooms that adds to the quality of the accommodation and supports the curriculum. These include an art room, a library, a recently updated ICT suite and a science room, although this is rather cramped when occupied by the larger classes in the school. The standard of decoration is adequate and the building is well maintained, clean, tidy and free from litter. The school grounds are satisfactory and offer appropriate play space for the pupils to use at break times. To supplement this, the school uses a local sports centre to provide additional opportunities for physical education.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school provides a helpful prospectus for parents which is supplemented by the Welcome Packs for each key stage. These documents include information about the school's aims and ethos, admissions and exclusions, details about staff employed at the school and a summary of the curriculum. The documents also give information about child protection arrangements, health and safety procedures and the complaints procedures.

Parents receive regular communications from the school. Daily diaries are used to communicate with parents, while daily handovers take place for most of the younger pupils. The school holds annual parent evenings and it provides twice yearly reports. Whilst the majority of the reports are satisfactory and meet requirements, some do not provide enough information about the achievement of pupils in the subjects taught.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of the regulations for registrations.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *ensure that all reports for parents contain detailed information about achievement in all the main subject areas taught (paragraph 6(5)).*

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

The school has a complaints policy, which has been revised recently. It sets out appropriate procedures, responsibilities and time-scales for dealing with complaints and it fully meet the requirements.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	St Crispin's School
DfES Number:	856/6000
Type of school:	Non-selective day school
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	3 - 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 79 Girls: 40 Total: 119
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys: 0 Girls: 1 Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 4 Girls: 1 Total: 5
Annual fees (day pupils):	£4,917 to £7,065
Address of school:	6 St Mary's Road Leicester LE2 1XA
Telephone number:	0116 2707648
Fax number:	0116 2709647
Email address:	enquiries@stcrispins.co.uk
Headteacher:	Mrs Denise Lofthouse
Proprietor:	Mr and Mrs P J W Lofthouse
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Andy McDowall HMI
Date of inspection:	9 - 12 October 2006

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