

# Crookhey Hall School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	8886022
Unique Reference Number	119849
Inspection number	321817
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Blake HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Crookhey Hall School is a secondary day school for boys with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, located in Cockerham, Lancashire. The school, which opened in December 1999, currently has 68 pupils on roll aged 11 to 16 years, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. Since its original registration, the school's ownership has changed, most recently in 2005 when Acorn Care and Education became the proprietor. All the pupils come from four local authorities within Lancashire, but travel times to and from the school vary and for a few it is at least two hours every day. The school's ethos is to enable every pupil to achieve some level of personal success, develop commitment and encourage achievement by means of improved self-esteem, personal relationships and transition into adult life. The previous inspection report was published in July 2004.

## Evaluation of the school

Crookhey Hall is a good school, providing a good quality of education and care where pupils make good overall progress. The vast majority of pupils enjoy attending the school, benefiting from working in small class groups, with very good adult support. The school is very responsive to the varying educational, social, emotional and behavioural needs of its pupils. The vocational curriculum is good, and is providing the pupils with a range of work-related learning opportunities suitable to their needs. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection and meets most regulations for independent schools.

## Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good overall, and is particularly strong in the vocational areas. The school's curriculum policy outlines a clear rationale for a balanced provision between a range of National Curriculum subjects and the practically-based vocational courses, which include construction, catering, brickwork skills, plumbing, welding, motorcycle engineering and horticulture. These vocational courses provide accredited activities designed to meet the specific needs of the pupils, all of whom have experienced significant learning difficulties in their previous schools. The combination of these curricular activities, together with the school's coverage of basic literacy and numeracy skills, support the vast majority of pupils in making good overall progress during their time at the school. The use of off-site facilities for outdoor and adventurous activities is also helping to enrich the learning

experiences of the pupils. Good links are maintained with Connexions personal advisers, which are ensuring that the pupils develop their understanding of the world of work.

The quality and effectiveness of teaching and assessment are good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good in all lessons, as is the management and organisation of the pupils. Although the format for teachers' planning is consistent across the school, the content varies in quality and usefulness as an aid to effective teaching. At its best, teachers' planning indicates clearly the range of learning activities and the expected outcomes from the pupils, both of which help in assessing the progress made in lessons. However, not all lesson plans contain this level of detail and, occasionally, there is insufficient information relating to what the teacher wants pupils to learn, or what personal behavioural or social skills they need to develop in order to overcome some of their existing learning difficulties. Where teaching is most effective, the pace and balance of activities support the pupils in developing their knowledge and understanding independently of the teacher. Too few teachers use lesson evaluation as an aid to future planning and provision. Teachers regularly collect information about the pupils' attitudes and general behaviour in lessons, which is shared daily as an aid to motivating the pupils. More formal methods of collecting assessment data are used effectively to monitor the progress of the pupils during their time at the school.

Although the standards achieved by the pupils are below those expected, the overall progress that the vast majority make during their time at the school is good, especially in improved attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning.

### Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The quality and effectiveness of the school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils is good. The pupils' moral and social characteristics are positively developed through the school's rewards system, 'points and stars', which not only recognises good work and effort, but good behaviour. The rewards also encourage the pupils to consider the feelings of others, and the impact that any anti-social behaviour has on them. This system is well understood and appreciated by the pupils, particularly because they are able to exchange these rewards for money or vouchers to spend in the school tuck shop.

The pupils know exactly what is expected of them, and they respond very positively to the consistent and calm approach that staff use to manage their behaviour, or to encourage them to complete a piece of work. On those occasions where a pupil's behaviour falls short of these expectations, staff respond promptly to address the problem, which can sometimes involve removing the pupil or pupils from the site of the incident to calm them down and review their actions. As a result of this strategy, pupils' behaviour is good overall, and significantly better than in their previous schools.

The pupils appreciate the very good adult support provided, indicating that it helps them to enjoy school because there is always someone with whom they can talk about any issue or problem, as well as providing reflection time that acknowledges their progress during the week. One comment, typical of many that inspectors heard was, 'staff really want to help us'.

Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good, and well supported through external visits that are used to enhance their learning. The curriculum also provides opportunities for the pupils to appreciate their own and other cultures through the study of significant events in human history; for example, the study of slavery as part of a humanities topic. The personal, social and health education programme also makes a good contribution to teaching pupils about aspects of contemporary society, such as the judicial system, PAYE taxation system, and world religions. Together with a range of taster sessions at local colleges, these learning experiences are helping the pupils to gain a better appreciation of themselves, relative to others in the local, national and global communities. These also give the pupils an appreciation of the world of work. They are effectively developing their personal and work skills.

This overall quality of provision in these areas is encouraging satisfactory attendance, which for the majority of pupils is significantly better when compared to their attendance at mainstream schools. This improved attendance is also helping the pupils to develop their self-worth and enjoyment of the many different school activities provided in and out of school.

### Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school's measures to promote the welfare, health and safety of the pupils, including child protection, are good. Some aspects of the school's work, for example, personal supervision are very effective. Throughout the school, adults actively encourage the development of pupils' physical, emotional and social well-being. Procedures for safeguarding the pupils, both in and out of school, are well known and well informed by appropriate risk assessments. The range of policies relating to health and safety, bullying, discipline and first aid show awareness of the needs of the pupils, and those who spoke with inspectors were very clear that any incidents of anti-social behaviour that may be a potential risk to their personal safety were dealt with quickly and effectively. The school's promotion of healthy living, including curricular work in personal, social, and health education is good. Despite this good work, however, a number of the pupils continue to smoke and eat unhealthily outside of school, although they do understand the potential health risks. There are good opportunities for pupils of all ages to engage in regular exercise within the curriculum, including a range of outdoor and adventurous activities off site. The safety checks on fire fighting equipment comply fully with requirements, as do the notices and fire exit routes from the school building. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school meets all the requirements for ensuring that staff, including those new in post, are suitably checked for their ability to teach or supervise the pupils.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are good overall. The school, which is based in an old Victorian building, has been developed sensibly to include a range of classrooms and some specialist accommodation of a suitable size for the age and number of pupils using them; all are in a good condition and well maintained. There is a range of suitable wash areas and toilets appropriate to the full age range of the pupils in the school. The specialist accommodation for information and communication technology, science and art provide suitable areas for the practical aspects taught in these subjects. The outside grassed area, which is used for some physical education lessons and other leisure activities by the pupils, is spacious and well maintained. The school's development of a dedicated horticultural area is good and, although not yet fully complete, provides the pupils with sufficient opportunities to practise many of the key skills that will be needed to achieve accreditation in the recently introduced City & Guilds accredited horticultural award.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information for parents, carers and others is satisfactory overall. Annual reports are very detailed about pupils' progress in their academic and personal achievements. The school provides a range of useful information in its prospectus, including a very clearly written statement about its aims and ethos offered. There is also all the required information about the staff who work in the school, and all the relevant contact details for the proprietor. However, the school does not routinely provide details of the school's policy on, and arrangements for, admissions, discipline and exclusions. Although there are school policies for the curriculum, child protection, health and safety, anti-bullying, sanctions and the complaints procedures, the school does not make it known to parents that these are available to them, on request, as are the particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has very recently reviewed its complaints policy and is fully compliant with the regulations.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide parents with particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e))
- ensure that parents are aware that they can request:
  - particulars of the curriculum offered by the school (paragraph 6(2)(g))
  - particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h))
  - particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i))
  - details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)).

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- develop greater consistency in the overall quality of lesson planning and ensure that all teachers indicate exactly what they expect the pupils to learn in every lesson
- ensure that all teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their lessons as an aid to future planning and provision.

## School details

Name of school	Crookhey Hall School	
DCSF number	8886022	
Unique reference number	119849	
Type of school	Secondary day special school for boys with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties	
Status	Independent	
Date school opened	December 1999	
Age range of pupils	11-16	
Gender of pupils	Boys	
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 68	Total: 68
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 68	Total: 68
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 13	Total: 13
Annual fees (day pupils)	£27,516.39	
Address of school	Crookhey Hall Garstang Road Cockerham Lancaster Lancashire LA2 0HA	
Telephone number	01524792618	
Fax number	01524792684	
Email address	reception@crookheyhallschool.co.uk	
Headteacher	Mr Paul Martin	
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education	
Reporting inspector	Brian Blake HMI	
Dates of inspection	18-19 June 2008	