

Cromwell High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106279
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	324365
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Sue Hunt

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Albert Hatton
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Foord
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2005
School address	Yew Tree Lane Dukinfield Cheshire SK16 5BJ
Telephone number	0161 3389730
Fax number	0161 3389731

Age group	11–16
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2009
Inspection number	324365

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: 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

Cromwell High School is for pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many pupils also have physical impairment, medical conditions and communication, social or emotional and behavioural difficulties. All pupils have statements of special educational need. Most live in Tameside and are White British. Very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. A very small number are looked after by the local authority. Boys far outnumber girls. The school is located on the same site as a mainstream sports college. They share corridors, dining and recreation facilities. The school has the Healthy Schools Award, Sportsmark Award, Award for Connexions Excellence and the Eco Schools Award. The school is about to be part of Stage 1 of the 'Building Schools for the Future' (BSF) initiative, funded by the local authority.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. Representative views from parents include, 'Staff are committed and professional', and, 'I am proud my son goes to Cromwell.' The school deserves its very strong reputation in the community. It is appreciated both for its work with its own pupils and for the work it does with its adjoining sports college. A wide range of links with welfare and support agencies make an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils are treated as individuals and the praise and reward they are given for their achievements raises their self-esteem very effectively. When pupils enter the school their knowledge and skills are well below those expected for their age. For the majority, standards remain very low because of the nature and extent of pupils' learning difficulties. However, all pupils make good progress and some make excellent progress. They all achieve well partly because they are encouraged to want to learn. The school values its pupils. Parents make a point of saying how they like the home/school diary link informing them of their children's progress.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and is sometimes outstanding. Teachers know how to motivate pupils very well. This results in pupils developing excellent attitudes towards learning and so they engage well in lessons. Teaching does not enable all pupils to participate fully in assessing their own achievements and that of their peers. The school has established an outstanding and continuously improving curriculum that is rich and imaginative, and that meets pupils' needs effectively. Provision for literacy and numeracy is good and this helps to prepare pupils well for their economic future.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are exceptional. Behaviour is excellent, reflecting the quality of relationships with adults and between pupils. At every turn, pupils are helped to learn how they can be as healthy as possible. The Healthy Schools and Sportsmark Awards indicate success in these particular areas as does pupils' enthusiastic participation in all manner of physical activities. Pupils are able to make the most of lessons, lunchtime and after-school clubs, visits and residential experiences because they are cared for exceptionally well. Procedures to safeguard pupils are firmly in place and policies are regularly reviewed to ensure that pupils are safe and healthy. Staff appreciate every aspect of each individual's needs and work closely together and with other professionals in order to provide the best possible conditions for learning. Pupils feel safe and have total confidence in the staff. As a result, those pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties relax and cooperate as staff reposition them and those with visual impairments reach out willingly to explore resources such as paint.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's inspiring leadership has been instrumental in the school's continuing success. He and the senior leadership team have worked very hard to maintain the very strong features, despite a number of long term staff absences. The headteacher and senior team recognise that they need to delegate more so that all subject leaders can take increasing responsibility for their subject areas of the curriculum and initiate improvement. Senior managers have established effective and rigorous target-setting systems across the school. They successfully compare themselves with other schools nationally. The school has excellent working relationships with the sports college and other local schools and these help the school to contribute exceptionally well to community cohesion. The governing body is supportive and holds the school to account well. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the school is well placed to improve still further. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all subject leaders evaluate their own curriculum areas and initiate continuous improvement.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to participate fully in evaluating their own and their peers' achievements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school is well able to demonstrate pupils' good achievement because it makes very effective use of the assessment information that it collects and the comparisons it makes with other schools. Pupils' individual targets and those for the whole school are challenging and are met. The very careful assessment procedures have picked up that pupils have progressed well in mathematics and science, but that achievement in English is not as strong. However, more consistent attention to speech and language and a review of English provision have started to have a very positive effect. Assessment analysis also shows that there is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils in the care of the local authority and those who are at an early stage of learning English also achieve as well as other pupils. Those with severe or profound and multiple difficulties, and the full range of additional needs, make equally good progress. All pupils sit external accreditation and have been very successful in Entry Level units and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network bronze and silver awards. Currently, a very small number of pupils are working towards GCSE examinations in resistant materials technology. Some of these examinations are taken jointly with the pupils from the adjoining high school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' remarkable personal development makes an excellent contribution to learning. Pupils mature very well and become thoughtful young people as a result of the excellent personal, social, health and citizenship education. Attendance has improved and is good; almost all absences are the result of illness or medical appointments. Pupils clearly enjoy school enormously and feel extremely safe and secure there. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They form firm relationships with adults and develop a strong means of communicating with others; many form friendships. They learn to understand their feelings and emotions, and to enjoy music, art and drama. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to their community. The school council has a very strong voice in making decisions and was instrumental recently in appointing a new teacher. There are a lot of examples of pupils being independent and their links with the sports college help with this. Pupils from both schools eat together in the shared canteen and play in the same schoolyard. Cromwell pupils work together safely and sensibly and help others by collecting for charities or taking part in Industry Days. They leave school well prepared for the next step of their lives at college.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have high expectations and pupils respond well to the challenges set for them. In every class, teachers establish, and pupils follow, orderly routines so that they move between activities without fuss. As a result, they often get a lot done in lessons. Relationships are strong. Teachers know their pupils very well and they help to make learning fun by matching activities to pupils' interests and abilities. Effective use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons. Daily incidents and events are communicated well to parents through the home/school diaries. Assessment is effective with pupils' progress very well charted. However, pupils are only evaluating their own and their peers' progress in a few lessons and this good practice has yet to permeate the whole school. Support in the classroom is usually very helpful and productive. Occasionally, the high number of adults in lessons impedes rather than helps pupils' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum meets the very diverse needs of the pupils very well, whilst ensuring that they receive their entitlement to the National Curriculum and religious education. Since the last inspection the school has improved what was an outstanding curriculum to one that is even better! Exciting developments include a 'physical world' module of work. Within this, staff have combined subjects such as design and technology, science, geography and health education to create an exciting curriculum area. This new area joins these subjects together, helping to provide cross-curricular links in all subjects across the school. The curriculum is very well adapted to accommodate the learning needs of all pupils. In addition, it is very well enriched. A wide range of visits, visitors, trips out of school, shared residential visits with the sports college and themed weeks help to bring learning to life within the school. Pupils' physical well-being is enhanced by plentiful opportunities to take part in sports, including swimming and rock climbing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is a school where not only every child matters, but also every family matters, too. The headteacher and staff go the 'extra mile' to support pupils and their families. Parents think very highly of the school. There are excellent relationships with external agencies and particularly with the sports college. There are many links both socially and academically between the two schools – a very happy and successful situation for both to be in. Pupils' safety is assured in school by careful risk assessments, suitable action to minimise risks, excellent moving and handling training undertaken by all staff, excellent levels of supervision and rigorous procedures for recruiting and training staff. Current government safeguarding requirements are met. Child protection matters have a very high profile. Pupils in the care of the local authority are monitored very closely. Every pupil has clear targets and attainable goals and pupils are helped to understand what they have to do to improve further with their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior staff provide extremely good leadership based upon very honest and effective school self-evaluation. Very effective systems are in place for training and supporting staff, including those new to working with learners with severe and profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The observation of lessons by managers is accurate. Whilst the headteacher and the senior managers have worked extremely hard putting good systems into place since the last inspection, there have been a lot of long term teaching staff absences. This means that the role of the subject leaders is not consistently well developed but the school recognises this. As a result, the school has not moved on and developed as far as it had planned to do. However, systems and staff are now coming into place to 'forge ahead' with plans for a revised school for the future under BSF. Community cohesion is outstandingly well promoted, for example, through the very strong links forged with the local community. Cromwell High School promotes equal opportunities extremely successfully. It ensures that all pupils are as involved as much as possible in every aspect of school life and that they learn to tolerate the differences in each other. There is now a very well established system for tracking the progress of pupils across the curriculum over time. The use of resources including ICT is good. The governors make a good contribution. They have an accurate understanding of the school's work because they have links with subjects and clear responsibilities.

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.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making me so welcome at your school and for all your help and politeness during the inspection. I know some of you may find reading difficult so your teachers will tell you about this letter.

It was great to see your good work in lessons and I enjoyed talking to the school council and some of you over my very healthy lunch! Your school is good and it has some outstanding things about it. The school looks after you exceptionally well and adults help you in every way they can. Your attitudes and behaviour are outstanding. You love learning and this helps you to make good progress. You are taught well in lessons. I was amazed at some of the things you do. I think it is brilliant that you share lessons and trips away with the sports college.

There are two things that I want to see improved. First, I have asked your teachers to check regularly whether their subject areas are helping you learn. Second, I want you to check your own work and say how well you think you are doing and also to check that of your classmates.

Once again, thank you for the welcome you gave me, it made my visit really enjoyable.