

Cruckton Hall School

Independent Special School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	893/6017
Unique Reference Number	123619
URN for social care	066774
Inspection number	329435
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2008
Reporting inspector	George Derby
Social care inspector	Trevor Hall

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). The inspection of boarding was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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.

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



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.

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the National Minimum Standards, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.

This was a light touch educational inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Cruckton Hall is an independent residential special school for boys aged from 8 to 19 and has 77 pupils currently on the school roll. It is located in a rural setting near Shrewsbury and opened in 1983. The school is approved by the Department of Children Schools and Families to admit pupils with Asperger's syndrome and autism. Pupils also display severe, challenging behaviour and social and emotional difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and they often have had disrupted educational backgrounds. Most pupils are taught on the Cruckton site, although post-16 students live offsite and attend local colleges with support from the school.

Some pupils stay just one night at the school while others board up to seven days per week. Respite care provision is also provided to support pupils' families. Altogether, 36 local authorities fund pupils currently on roll.

The school aims 'to provide a warm, structured and caring learning environment in which each boy feels safe, feels secure, can succeed, is treated as an individual and can develop his skills and talents so that he leaves the school as an active participant in, and a positive contributor to society'.

The school was last inspected in September 2005 and the boarding provision in March 2008. The inspection of the boarding provision also took place at the same time as this inspection.

Evaluation of the school

Cruckton Hall provides a good quality of education and offers good, 'seamless', boarding provision. It is outstanding in promoting pupils' personal development and does exceptionally well in 'opening doors' for pupils, enabling them to learn, and preparing them for life after school in employment, college, university or in more sheltered environments. This is because of the headteacher's considerable drive and determination for pupils to do their very best, the exceptional curriculum which is on offer during the day, evenings and weekends and the excellent way in which pupils are consistently managed around the clock. Pupils' academic progress is good because teaching is good. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory rather than good because not all key issues have been addressed. The school meets all but one regulation.

Quality of education

The quality of education is good. The school's curriculum is outstanding and creates in pupils an excitement about learning which they have not experienced previously. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, as required by pupils' statements, and there is an extensive array of additional opportunities provided once lessons have finished (also open to day pupils), as well as evening and weekend activities.

The school has a 24 hour curriculum which caters exceptionally well for the extreme needs that many of the pupils display. This is why the school is particularly successful in the way it improves pupils' personal development. From a young age pupils gain a considerable number and range of Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) awards as a result of training and support for their personal and practical skills in the residences. Education and welfare are very well integrated and all staff work to common goals. The whole package contributes excellently to pupils' progress in their personal development and in improving pupils' readiness to learn, often a major obstacle for them initially. Pupils' starting points vary widely, but whatever these are, pupils make good progress.

Opportunities are particularly well tailored to pupils' needs, aptitudes and interests. A real strength is the work of the therapists and assistants in supporting pupils with more complex needs within the curriculum. Occupational therapy is now making major inroads into helping pupils understand their sensory needs. Pupils' often complex language and social needs are aided particularly well through the social use of language groups and attention to their individual language disorders. Individuals' and families' psychological and emotional needs are supported through the sterling work of staff in the psychology department.

The considerable emphasis on pupils working together, learning from and about different situations, developing empathy through drama and solving problems is seen in much of the work onsite as well as offsite. From a young age pupils are involved in outdoor education such as environmental science, and 'Forest School', a national initiative. This is to support pupils' understanding of language and emotional development, as well as gain a sense of history by working in an outdoor environment. Work related learning for older pupils at Blist Hill, near Ironbridge also enables pupils to earn a wage and use this to budget for things they wish to buy. Summer camps provide adventurous activities as well as considerable opportunities to develop independence.

Pupils can choose between a very wide range of pathways in Key Stage 4 and at post 16, some of which are academic and some practical and vocational. A significant strength is the way all 'packages' are specifically tailored to the individual. As a result, some pupils are able to gain five A* to C passes at GCSE at the end of Year 11 while others gain Entry Level certificates or AQA awards. A small number of students progress onto AS and A Level each year and a few go on to obtain a university place. Others move on to work or higher level college courses. A few pupils who have been on an academic route up to Year 11 are often guided to choose a totally different range of courses at college depending on the level of their social and emotional ability to cope in large settings and also in relation to their career aspirations. A key strength of the school is the way it supports pupils' transition, whether this is into the school, into courses or adult life. Pupils are particularly well informed through the wide range of support they receive, as well as formal careers guidance. They quickly gain accurate knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses and what will suit them best.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. This is because pupils work in a calm and orderly environment and activities are generally matched well to pupils' needs. Sometimes, though, higher attaining pupils do not have enough different work to do. The steps in a lesson occur in a predictable way so pupils are secure about what they are learning and what is to come next. Support staff know the needs of pupils well and assist them effectively; all staff give pupils plenty of praise to spur them on. The use of computers in lessons is satisfactory overall and an improvement since the last inspection. Staff display information and activities on the school's interactive whiteboards and this is making a big impact on the learning of primary age pupils, who respond very positively. However occasionally, some staff in the secondary department miss the opportunity to use these or other visual media. Towards the end of a lesson, in all contexts, while staff do take time to review pupils' learning, this is not consistently well done and is far too brief.

Assessment systems are thorough and detailed. However, the school's system for tracking pupils' progress does not allow small steps of progress to be recorded in order to help staff gain a thorough overview of pupil progress within or across years.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils enjoy school thoroughly and the transformation in their attitudes is immense; one stated, 'if you have to come to school this is the best one to come to'. Another said, 'I'm very happy to be here. I would not know where I'd be without this school.' As a result, pupils' attendance is excellent.

The whole raison d'être of the school is to raise pupils' self-esteem, knowledge and confidence and it does this exceptionally well. Pupils progress from an initial feeling of a lack of self-worth, often due to educational failure or their inability to make sense of the world, to confident individuals able to express coherent views and who are generally well adjusted. Pupils are constantly helped to see things from all people's perspectives and are frequently challenged with moral dilemmas and choices. This emphasis on developing the ability to reflect is a key to success that not only takes place in school but also in residences. The excellent systems and support for their behaviour help pupils to work towards making the right moral choices. Steady improvements are underpinned by the infectious determination of the headteacher and staff. While overall, pupils' behaviour is generally good, the improvement in their behaviour while at the school is astonishing.

Excellent support is given to aid pupils to have a say in running the school through the school council, house groups and also in the wide range of ways pupils have to contribute to the local community. Outstanding preparation for post school life results from a clear emphasis on development of independence skills, particularly communication and the ability of pupils to manage themselves in social settings within the community.

Through school activities, such as assembly, lessons in humanities, but also in the residences where pupils live, the school strongly promotes pupils' understanding of diversity and cultural celebrations as well as their knowledge of citizenship within a multicultural society.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Highly detailed and well thought out risk assessments are in place for individual pupils and for activities on or off site. These contribute well to pupils' personal safety and any risks which may arise from their special educational needs. Pupils say they feel safe because staff are always there to support them. Although some disagreements do occasionally occur between pupils, staff are vigilant in sorting any issues.

An adequate policy for educational visits has been put in place since the last inspection. While fire risk assessments are carried out for all buildings and are broadly satisfactory, they do not actually identify the level of risk. Health and safety

procedures are thorough and the high quality accommodation is excellently monitored and well maintained.

Health plans for pupils are thoroughly thought through. The oversight of pupils' medical needs and the arrangements for dispensing of medication by the school nurses are excellent. Occasionally, some food is not as nutritious as it might be and this is a niggle that some pupils have. The implementation of the school's behaviour policy is excellent and rewards and sanctions are consistently applied across the school and residences. Very thorough analysis of pupils' behaviour occurs through the lesson records collected and the data kept on restraint. Group and individual behaviour is reported back to pupils in the end of day assembly although opportunities are sometimes missed to review this in relation to personal targets during a lesson.

The school's safeguarding procedures are satisfactory and a single central record with all the required information about checks on staff has now been put in place. Systems for recruitment are well defined and carried out, generally in line with the school policy. Child protection procedures are adequate. One of the two designated persons responsible is awaiting updated training, although the main person is trained as required. As the school admits day pupils, formal registers of attendance are required. However, these are only completed on a Monday and a Friday during tutor time.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The residential provision was judged to be good and National Minimum Standards were met. A full report on this provision is available on application to Ofsted by contacting the National Business Unit on 0845 640 40 45.

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 the one listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- maintain registers of attendance in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

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.

- Ensure that the school is able to better demonstrate and analyse the progress the pupils make by refining the tracking arrangements to show the small steps of progress that some pupils make, and that the rates of progress are closely monitored by all staff.
- Assess pupils' learning at the end of a lesson so that staff and pupils themselves have a clear view of what they have learned in a lesson.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
--	--	---	--	--

The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision		✓		
----------------------------------	--	---	--	--

School details

Name of school	Cruckton Hall School
DCSF number	893/6017
Unique reference number	123619
Type of school	Residential Special School
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1983
Age range of pupils	8–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 77
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 77
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 17
Annual fees (day pupils)	£89,250
Annual fees (boarders)	£175,000
Address of school	Cruckton Shrewsbury Shropshire SY5 8PR
Telephone number	01743 860206
Fax number	01743 860941
Email address	pdm@cruckton.com
Headteacher	Mr Paul Mayhew
Proprietor	Mr Trevor Price
Reporting inspector	George Derby
Dates of inspection	11–12 November 2008