

Cranbrook College

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	317/6054
Unique Reference Number	102868
Inspection number	333818
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

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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, the purpose of which is 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 college

Cranbrook College is registered to admit up to 205 boys aged between four and sixteen years. The school was founded in 1896 and was purchased by the current proprietor, Cognita Schools Limited, in May 2007. The boys come from a wide range of cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Increasingly most pupils are of Asian heritage. There are currently 208 pupils on roll. A small number of pupils have a learning difficulty. As stated at the college entrance, Cranbrook aims to provide its pupils with an enjoyment of learning and school, to maximise their potential, and to build character, confidence and consideration. The headteacher was appointed in September 2007 and, since January 2009, also leads a local school owned by the proprietor. Traditionally the college has operated as three distinct 'schools,' preparatory, junior and senior. Over the past two years the emphasis has shifted to departments for each phase.

This is the first inspection of the college by Ofsted. In March 2004 the college was inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate and issues raised at that time were followed up with monitoring visits in October 2005 and May 2006. Ofsted inspected the Early Years Foundation Stage in October 2004. There are currently 11 children in the Reception class. Childcare is provided for the boys on the same site as the college but this is not owned or run by the proprietor and was not part of this inspection. There were no Year 11 students present during the inspection. Having completed their examinations, they had already left the college.

Evaluation of the college

Cranbrook College provides its pupils with a good quality education. This includes the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Significant improvements have taken place across the college since the last inspection, particularly in relation to teaching and assessment over the past two years. Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is judged to be satisfactory overall at this time, although some aspects are good and the picture is an improving one. The college meets all of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The separate aspects of curriculum, teaching and assessment are all of equally good quality. The focus over recent years has been on greater consistency between and within departments, with an overriding emphasis on pupils' progress. This has generated good quality professional dialogue, raised expectations and has helped to revise the planning and delivery of the curriculum. In turn, this successfully enables pupils to make consistently good progress from their individual starting points. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children generally reach the higher points of the Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception. By the end of Year 6, the majority of pupils attain the highest levels in English, mathematics and science. The vast majority of pupils gain top grades in their GCSEs, enabling them to go on to further education courses of their choice.

All of the required curriculum documentation is in place and much of it is of good quality, supporting teachers well when they plan lessons. However, there are some inconsistencies between the prep, junior and senior departments. So, although the curriculum for each subject within each key stage is good in isolation, there are no clear aims or priorities for how subjects are taught across the college as a whole. This means that pupils perceive their studies in isolation rather than a continuum of learning. Senior staff are aware of this and have already identified ways forward.

The college day was appropriately extended at the beginning of this academic year to give additional curriculum time for older pupils. With the exception of design and technology (D&T), all National Curriculum subjects are taught and provide well balanced programmes at each key stage. Provision for D&T is limited by the accommodation, although it is taught in the preparatory department. Appropriate emphasis is given to English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology. French is taught at all key stages and Spanish in the senior department. Opportunities for physical education (PE) and sports on site are very limited but good use is made of local facilities. Pupils and parents say that they would like more educational trips. It is true that in the past these opportunities were not widespread but things have improved this year. For example, there have been museum visits, two overseas trips, and visits to Epping Forest. However, some pupils have had more opportunities than others and the programme of visits to support class work is not well thought through. At the end of the day, there are a variety of clubs to choose from and the range has been extended this year. Pupils are keen to attend these but are not always able to maintain their commitment as the term goes on.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is a strength of the curriculum and is rightly given high priority. It is an area of the curriculum that works well in ensuring consistent messages and approaches to pupils throughout the college. By working sensitively through a series of relevant units and topical issues, older pupils are able to reflect on their views, roles and responsibilities in relation to topics such as sex and relationships, drugs and alcohol, bullying and refugees. The introduction of the

SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning) units with younger pupils this year has been effective in supporting their personal development across a range of topics.

The quality of pupils' work in books and in lessons has been thoroughly monitored by staff. Lessons are now planned according to a standard format with clear guidelines for good quality components. Expectations of teachers are high and they now focus their attention on the progress that pupils make in class and over time. In addition, as a result of recent training, staff increasingly apply the principles of emotional and social intelligence to their teaching. This successfully helps pupils to be more active in their learning through discussion and reflection. Teachers ask challenging questions and reinforce subject specific vocabulary and concepts very well. Pupils of all ages respond equally well to the challenge and say that they enjoy their lessons. In some lessons the match of activity to pupils' ability is not sufficient to ensure that all pupils in the class are doing as well as they could. Similarly, some teachers make good use of marking to extend pupils' thinking but others give them insufficient guidance on how to do better next time or to address misconceptions.

At the time of the last inspection, assessment was inadequate. However, systems and procedures have developed well since then. The tracking of attainment in the senior department now gives greater options for interrogating the data. This is developing further so that senior pupils can visually track their own progress through individual unit booklets. Although the junior and preparatory departments make use of Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPs) data, their electronic tracking is not as well developed as that of the senior school. Initial assessments for children when they start in the Reception Year are not used rigorously enough to establish a secure set of starting points. Nevertheless, current assessment procedures successfully ensure that staff in the prep, junior and senior departments identify when and where a pupil may be underachieving. Such identification leads to department action plans to determine and monitor additional support.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils develop good personal skills as they progress through the college. Children in the Reception class work and play very well together. They are inquisitive, develop good independence and confidently explain their work in great detail. At the other end of the college, Year 10 pupils show great maturity and have developed close friendships. These pupils have just completed their two-week work placements and feel that they have learned much from the experiences. Behaviour around the college is generally good. Particular care and consideration is required in order for all to move sensibly and swiftly around the narrow corridors and stairways. The boys do this very well. They also have a good appreciation and understanding of one another's cultural differences and of British institutions and services. Pupils' different heritages feature prominently in lessons and they are happy to speak openly about their beliefs and cultures.

The PSHE curriculum provides well for pupils' moral, social and cultural development, as does the work of the school council. Opportunities for pupils to explore their thoughts and feelings help them grapple with some complex and pertinent issues. For example, when some pupils were taunting others about their religion this was not only brought to the school council, but was also addressed head on in PSHE lessons. Similarly, pupils had raised concerns that good behaviour was not rewarded enough. In response, behaviour cards were introduced in January and pupils say that behaviour around the college has improved. They like the praise and rewards generated by the new system, and also like the way that staff have written expectations for their conduct too. Pupils acknowledge other improvements, such as cleaner toilets, more recycling and changes to lunchtime and tuck menus. This is in contrast to their comments in pre-inspection questionnaires where some said that their views were not taken into account. Further discussion indicates that the boys are not happy with the lack of physical activities, the cramped play area and small classrooms. Some would also like the option of bringing a packed lunch. Pupils' attendance is about average.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

This area of the college's work is satisfactory because although appropriate systems and checks are in place to identify and minimise risks, monitoring and recording procedures are not sufficiently robust. The last inspection report highlighted several inadequacies and the pace of improvement was not initially fast enough. However, with new appointments this year, a range of relevant health and safety training, and support from the proprietor, the pace of change has gained momentum. For example, more staff have been trained in first aid, fire-risk assessments are up-to-date, a range of relevant policies have been revised and a suitable plan is in place to address a range of disability, discrimination and access issues. Other aspects are strong, such as thorough risk assessments for educational visits, and the recording of accidents and incidents. However, there has been no environmental health report for a while and catering staff have not had any recent training.

The college is part of Redbridge's Healthy Schools programme and staff are using this to consult widely with the community. They have already made a difference in reducing the salt, fat and sugar content in the meals and snacks. The boys appreciate this. Furthermore, they say that it hasn't affected the taste of the food! Meals are cooked on the premises daily from fresh ingredients and pupils like the food, saying that there is always something good to choose, either hot, cold, vegetarian or meat.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The college meets all of the regulations. In partnership with the proprietor, they have appropriate systems to recruit and check new staff, and checks made on all staff are suitably recorded. Personnel files are not well ordered; they are, however, in the process of being transferred across to an electronic system.

The college's premises and accommodation

As mentioned in past reports, the accommodation is cramped and only just suitable for the number of pupils and the educational opportunities required for the age range. There is no covered outdoor area for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Nevertheless, adaptations and extensions to the building enable the college to make the most of the space available and pupils and staff work around the limitations very well. There are plans to purchase and adapt a nearby property in order to expand the provision in the near future.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Pupils and their families are provided with a wealth of information about the day-to-day running of the college. This includes planners, diaries, reading logs and newsletters. In response to parental wishes, the college now issues half termly curriculum bulletins in the junior department and are about to do the same for the preparatory department. Over 95% of families are linked to the college's email system, which provides them with weekly bulletins and updates. The website has been upgraded very recently and contains all of the required information and much more. This will go live over the summer.

Each half term, parents receive a report outlining their child's attainments. For pupils in Years 7 to 11 there is an academic profile meeting to discuss prospective Key Stage 3 or GCSE grades. This is much appreciated by parents and the practice is to be extended to other year groups.

Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints policy and procedures meet all of the regulations and the college records parental concerns thoroughly.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the Reception class with skills that are generally in line with expectations for their age but weaker in speaking and listening. They benefit from the small class size and make good overall progress by the end of the year. Their best achievement is in reading. Assessment procedures are well established, but the information is not used rigorously enough to identify children's starting points in sufficient detail. Children are happy and confident learners because staff are sensitive to their needs and support their personal development in many ways. Children also demonstrate independence in their self-chosen activities and persist at tasks. They work collaboratively and show consideration to each other. Relationships with one another and with adults are positive and this contributes to their good personal development. As a result, learning flows without interruption and the boys apply themselves well in their learning. They respond with great enjoyment to the environment, which provides them with a range of activities to support their learning.

Children have access to the outdoor, but the activities and resources provided do not consistently support the development of skills across all of the six areas of learning.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Adults work closely together as a team. They are keen to develop their practice and value the training opportunities provided by the local authority. This successfully improves the provision because they share what they have learnt and put it into practice. Staff work very well with parents, providing a smooth transfer of their children into the life of the college. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The college meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ("the Regulations").

What the college could do to improve further

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

- ensure greater consistency between the prep, junior and senior departments when planning the curriculum and developing assessment systems
- further refine lesson planning throughout the college to ensure that different activities are well matched to different levels of pupils' abilities
- in the Early Years Foundation Stage, extend the use of the outside play space to cover all areas of learning on a daily basis
- make better use of initial assessments to determine clear baselines soon after children join the Reception class.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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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			✓	
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?		✓		
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?		✓		
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?		✓		
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?			✓	
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?		✓		
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?		✓		

School details

Name of school	Cranbrook College
DCSF number	317/6054
Unique reference number	102868
Type of school	Day primary and secondary
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1896
Age range of pupils	4–16 years
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	Boys: 208
Annual fees	£6,645 - £8,535
Address of school	34 Mansfield Road Ilford Essex IG1 3BD
Telephone number	020 8554 1757
Fax number	020 8518 0317
Email address	amos@cranbrookcollege.org.uk
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Moss
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Limited
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI
Dates of inspection	7–8 July 2009