

Crispin School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123873
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	340449
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Karl Sampson HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ann Morrison
Headteacher	Mr Paul James
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 26 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, policy documents and students' work. They also scrutinised 154 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, and questionnaires completed by staff and a sample of students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum in securing good progress for all groups of students
- how effectively the provision meets the needs of all groups of students, including the more vulnerable, and ensures that all outcomes are equally good
- the impact of strategies to improve outcomes for disaffected students and those exhibiting challenging behaviour
- the contribution of the technology and languages specialisms to school improvement
- the effectiveness and impact of the monitoring and evaluation carried out by senior and middle leaders on student outcomes.

Information about the school

Crispin School is slightly larger than the average comprehensive school and serves the town of Street and the surrounding area. Most students are of White British heritage and 0.9% do not speak English as their first language. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also well below the national average. These include students who have moderate learning difficulties or who have social, emotional and behavioural issues. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is less than half of that found in other schools nationally. The school has held technology specialist status since 1999 and was awarded a second specialism for languages in 2008. It holds a number of awards including Healthy School and Eco School. In 2007 it received a National Teaching Award for its contribution to education for sustainable development.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The quality of education provided by Crispin School is good. The school uses its work on education for sustainable development and specialist status effectively to work well with a range of partners to improve outcomes for all students. As a result, the contribution that students make to the school and community is outstanding. Students are extremely proud of this. The improvements are driven by a headteacher who has a commitment and passion to raise the aspirations of all students and achieve the highest quality outcomes for them. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school is in no doubt of the improvements needed. Under his leadership the school has successfully tackled boys' underachievement and has focused the work of the school on this area. School leaders know that the progress for some students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is not yet as good as that of their peers and have started to put in place strategies to address this. Students' overall progress and the quality of their learning are good, attainment is average and improving and the school shows good capacity to improve.

The quality of learning in classrooms across the school is improving because of the good leadership and management of the school. Students enjoy coming to school and behave well. The large majority of teaching is good and teachers assess work regularly. Some teachers are very skilful in tailoring learning to fully meet the needs of all students and ensure progress which is consistently good or better. They know exactly where students are in their learning, understand when they are ready to take the next steps and convey clearly how this can best be achieved. However, these skills are not yet shared by all teachers. Senior leaders are well aware of the need to strengthen the use of data and assessment information by middle leaders to manage improvement, and to improve the consistency of teaching and assessment among teachers.

The curriculum is good and current improvements in boys' achievement have been strongly supported by a number of carefully considered curriculum changes. The school provides particularly good support to students who are potentially vulnerable, as well as tailoring provision for those students whose behaviour might otherwise exclude them from education and examination success. The school cares for, and supports and guides, students well. Outstanding safeguarding procedures ensure that students are safe and well looked after. Attendance is improving year-on-year and is now above average thanks to effective tracking systems. The school's focus on education for sustainable development has enhanced the good spiritual, moral and social development shown by students. However, students' understanding of the cultural diversity of contemporary Britain is less well developed.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen assessment practices in teaching and learning so that students' progress is consistently good or better across all subjects, by:
 - extending the use of effective questioning and dialogue, so that students are given greater opportunity to reflect deeply on their learning and progress
 - ensuring that all students know exactly what they need to do to improve their work through consistent high quality verbal and written feedback.
- Further develop and strengthen the leadership and management of teaching and learning, by:
 - ensuring that systems for monitoring and supporting teaching and learning are developed fully so that best practice is shared and improvements become more deeply embedded
 - rigorously monitoring and using the assessment information for different student groups to ensure that learning opportunities fully meet the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Ensure students develop their understanding of other cultures within the United Kingdom, by extending current provision in this area and monitoring its effectiveness.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In the large majority of lessons observed, students make good progress and enjoy their learning. As a result, most students behave well and respond enthusiastically, especially when engaged in active and practical learning. This was particularly the case in those lessons where the work was well matched to students' ability levels and where skilful questioning was used to enable students to explain their thinking. The quality of learning in classrooms across the school is improving because of changes to the curriculum as well as the school's work to develop the quality of teaching and learning. For example, in the past, boys did not achieve as well as girls. This is no longer the case. In the large majority of lessons observed by inspectors, boys and girls made equally good progress.

Standards at the end of Year 11 are in line with the national average. In 2009 the percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics was 55% compared to the national average of 50%. Current improvements in the rate of progress for boys are beginning to push up attainment. Data for students currently in Years 10 and 11 offer strong evidence that students are well placed to meet challenging targets. Students' work and the school's own analysis of tracking data on students' progress confirm that standards are rising and achievement overall is good and improving.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the progress expected given their starting points. School leaders know that sometimes activities in lessons are

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not yet sufficiently finely tuned to ensure that progress is good across all subjects for this group of students.

Students say that they feel well cared for, supported and safe in school. They report that incidents of bullying are rare and dealt with quickly and effectively. Behaviour overall is good, especially in the lessons that engage and motivate them. Students have a good understanding of what constitutes healthy living, acknowledging that not everyone makes use of the healthy option in the school canteen. Students feel strongly that the school prepares them well for the workplace with the development of good enterprise and personal skills. Many students make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. The school's award winning work on education for sustainable development provides a superb range of opportunities for students to take on responsibility. Large numbers volunteer to join the various sustainable development groups as well as to become prefects, charity fund raisers, school council members and peer mentors.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The school accurately evaluates the quality of teaching as good. The large majority of lessons observed were good or better and characterised by positive relationships between teachers and students which provide a good basis for learning. Where teaching is good it is because the teaching strategies and learning opportunities are carefully matched to meet all students' needs. A snappy pace ensures that students are motivated, well behaved and generally make good or better progress relative to their starting points. These lessons are carefully planned and offer frequent opportunities for students to learn actively rather than listening to lengthy presentations by teachers. The use of skilful, targeted questioning to assess students' understanding, requiring students to think for themselves and apply what they have learned, is also a key feature. A small minority of lessons are not of this good quality because there is a slower pace to learning, less emphasis on meeting individual students' needs, and fewer opportunities for students to work without direction. In lessons where these features were apparent, progress is at best satisfactory.

The use of assessment is satisfactory and improving. The school has good procedures to track the progress of individual students, set challenging targets and deal with underachievement through good assessment practice. The best involves constructive feedback through the use of effective questioning and meaningful dialogue in lessons. It is supported by high quality written feedback which makes explicit the next steps that students need to take to improve their learning. However, there remain some inconsistencies in the way that departments use and monitor these procedures. The leadership team recognise this and are working with departments to bring assessment practice overall up to the level of the best.

The school reviews and customises the curriculum regularly to ensure it meets the needs of all students. There is a good balance between vocational and academic courses. The school's technology and languages specialisms are used to good effect in developing curriculum provision. The introduction of a broader and more individually tailored curriculum has improved the behaviour, motivation and attendance of students, mainly boys, who had previously underachieved and/or become disaffected. Courses and work-based learning opportunities are offered in partnership with local colleges and employers where appropriate, and there are effective links with local schools.

Enrichment days, enterprise activities and cross-curricular projects add to students' enjoyment and offer different and challenging ways for them to learn. The pupils' 'voice' is strong and used effectively by the school to inform these developments. There is a broad range of well-supported extra-curricular activities.

The school provides a caring environment and a range of personalised learning programmes which give good support to all students, especially those who are more vulnerable. 'The Flexible Learning Centre' supports Key Stage 3 students who find learning a struggle and the 'Return to Learning Unit' supports students with challenging behaviour. They are valuable aspects of provision which ensure that some students do not choose to stop coming to school because they find being in lessons difficult. Staff in the student support centre work closely and collaboratively with parents, a range of outside agencies and a neighbouring special school to ensure that students' diverse

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needs are met. However, this information is not always used as effectively as it could be within subjects. Students receive good quality guidance about their future options, which prepares them well for employment, training or further education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders have worked diligently to promote an ethos of teamwork among a staffing body that has changed substantially since the previous inspection. They have successfully encouraged collaboration amongst staff, who are successfully engaged in raising standards and improving achievement for all. The headteacher inspires a strong belief in the school's success, which is shared by staff, parents and students. The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is exemplified by its work to successfully tackle the underperformance of boys. This work is now being extended to ensure that all students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their peers.

Senior and middle leaders have a shared understanding of the key issues which need to be tackled. Planning is based on good quality data, complemented by subject reviews which highlight areas of strength as well as areas of improvement. The use of target setting to raise achievement has improved. All students have challenging targets, and their progress towards them is reviewed every half term. The school is developing its analysis of the performance of different groups of students. This information is being used to help departments identify where to intervene to provide additional support and where new teaching strategies need to be developed to improve learning. There is much in place to encourage teachers to improve their practice further. The school recognises the weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluation and the need to ensure that the best practice found in teaching and learning is shared and consistently applied across the entire curriculum.

Governors provide good support and satisfactory challenge. Their confidence and expertise in evaluating the performance of the school in relation to national expectations is growing. They have an appropriate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Statutory responsibilities are discharged well and governors are rigorous in ensuring that all safeguarding procedures are of high quality and meticulously maintained. Community cohesion is promoted effectively through the school's work on education for sustainable development, as a specialist technology and

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languages school and through local partnerships.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire, a very large majority showed that they were highly satisfied with the quality of education and care the school provides. Those who wrote positive comments referred to the school as 'supportive' and 'effective'. This is reflected in the positive responses to questions 1, 2, 3, 5 and 13. A very small minority of parents expressed concern about behaviour in some lessons. The inspection team judged that behaviour was good and that the school has effective provision and procedures in place to support behaviour. A few parents raised concerns about the effectiveness with which the school communicates information, or takes account of their suggestions or concerns. Inspectors recognise that any lapse in communication is a concern for those involved but consider that the school works hard to communicate with parents and act upon their views. The school recognises that it needs to persist in finding effective ways of communicating with some families, particularly those who are unable to come into school, or do not have access to the internet.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Crispin school to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 154 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1107 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	28	99	64	7	4	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	36	23	107	70	5	3	4	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	42	27	91	59	14	9	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	27	88	57	16	10	5	3
The teaching is good at this school	35	23	101	66	9	6	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	13	98	64	25	16	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	15	100	65	18	12	6	4
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	41	27	81	53	14	9	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	21	91	59	17	11	6	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	14	89	58	21	13	10	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	16	70	51	25	16	9	6
The school is led and managed effectively	31	21	89	58	14	9	12	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	29	93	60	10	7	4	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Crispin School, Street BA16 0AD

Thank you all for welcoming us into your school during the recent two-day inspection. My team and I enjoyed meeting you and finding out about how well the school is meeting your needs and caring for you. It is our judgement that your school is providing you with a good education, and that it is an improving school.

The school has worked really hard since the last inspection to improve your achievement, especially that of the boys. Your headteacher leads the school well, and is ably supported by other staff and the governors. They are all determined that you should have the opportunity to succeed and their work enables you to achieve good outcomes overall. You told us how much you appreciated the work of your teachers.

You enjoy coming to school, are well cared for, have a good range of curriculum opportunities and are well taught. You particularly appreciate the positive benefits that your work on education for sustainable development has brought as well as the range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. You told us you feel safe, and we think your behaviour in and around the school is good. You are polite, enthusiastic and proud of your school and, as a result, make an outstanding positive contribution to the life of the school and the wider community.

We have asked your headteacher to improve the school in a number of ways. He was already aware of their importance and we were able to agree them very easily.

- Teaching is good but could be better in certain ways. These include working with teachers to make teaching good across all subjects, giving you better verbal and written feedback on your work, and allowing more time to reflect upon your learning and progress in lessons.
- Leadership of teaching and learning is good but could be even better. We have asked the school to ensure that all teachers share and use their knowledge of your strengths and weaknesses to plan lessons which better match your needs.
- Your understanding of other cultures in this country is not as strong as it could be. We have asked that the school increases the number of opportunities for you to broaden your understanding of other cultures who share our country.

Once again, thank you for your contribution to the inspection. Very best wishes for your

future happiness and success.

Yours sincerely

Karl Sampson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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