

Cressey College

Independent special school inspection report

DCSF registration number	306/6104
Unique Reference Number (URN)	133438
Inspection number	348770
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², 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 school

Cressey College opened in 2006 on a different site, under a different name. It was opened by a company to serve the children who lived in three children's homes that it also owned. The company reorganised in 2009 and decided to close the school. The headteacher, who is also the proprietor, negotiated to re-open it under a new name and on a different site. On 1 January 2010, the newly named and newly registered Cressey College opened at its current address as a secondary school for students aged 11–19 years. Therefore, this is the first time that it has been inspected. The school aims 'to give students stability in order for them to gain emotional balance and to develop their self-esteem and positive self-image in a safe and nurturing environment'.

The school is the sole occupier of a converted church hall located in a quiet side street. The unaltered part of the building is used for teaching those students who have the social and personal skills to work in small groups. The newly formed classrooms are used for one-to-one teaching with the few students who cannot manage to work with, or alongside, others. Of the 11 boys and girls on roll, three are taught on a one-to-one basis for most of the time. One student is over the age of 16 years and all but one have statements of special educational needs. The school has students from four local authorities. It has no particular religious affiliation.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education and it achieves its aims as the tailored provision meets individuals' learning and personal needs. Students are well taught and they receive a good curriculum. Good provision for promoting students' personal development results in improved relationships and the pace of their learning increases as attitudes and behaviour become more positive. As a result, students make good progress and achieve well. All safeguarding requirements are met and good arrangements for students' welfare, health and safety meet all but one of the regulations. All other regulations are met.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Quality of education

Although it has not been open long, Cressey College has established itself as a school that provides a good quality, relevant and appropriate education for disaffected young people with particularly challenging behaviour. It is successful because it provides a setting that meets individuals' needs. This may be nurturing, one-to-one work for some, while for others it is work in small groups in which they have to consider the needs of others. Students perform well in both situations.

The school plans a good variety of learning activities and opportunities. The curriculum is good. It encompasses a wide range of subjects to ensure that students acquire not only key literacy and numeracy skills, but also creative and aesthetic awareness, scientific and technological understanding, and physical and practical skills. Students receive accreditations that include GCSE passes in English, mathematics and art. The work-related learning curriculum is taught partly on-site and partly elsewhere. Careers education is part of the school's good personal, social and health education programme and it covers topics such as preparing for an interview. Successful partnerships with other schools enable students to avail themselves of the broad range of vocational courses and facilities at a local maintained special school and, increasingly, at a local mainstream secondary school.

Teaching and assessment are good. Teaching has particular strengths in contexts such as breaks, lunchtimes and even taxi arrivals and departures. The continual and sensitive support that teachers provide throughout school time is very influential in terms of the impact that it has on encouraging students' learning and promoting their personal development; for example, in choosing the right options in behaviour and encouraging self-management techniques. Lessons have common strengths, such as the quality of interactions, the use of praise and encouragement, and the effectiveness of behaviour management. In the more effective lessons, staff expect learning to proceed at a good pace. They present interesting activities that challenge students, striking the right balance between making activities accessible so that independent learning is possible and supporting students when difficulties present themselves. Learning is less effective in the lessons where activities lack challenge, or when staff intervene too quickly by offering prompts, making suggestions or answering questions on students' behalf.

Students' work is assessed accurately, and the best practice uses this information to match activities closely to students' capabilities. Students' achievements over the longer term, both academic and personal, are tracked well and senior staff monitor their progress regularly. As the school has only been open for six months, there has not been enough time for it to demonstrate sustained, accelerated progress over a long period. It can, however, show an upward trend in students' attainment in English and mathematics. Students also make substantial progress against standardised tests, such as those for measuring reading and spelling ages. These good gains in core skills combine with the impressive advances that students make in their personal development, most notably their willingness to participate and to behave well, to form a springboard for further success. This is evident in the good

progress that they make in achieving the challenging targets in individual education plans. Students make good progress from their starting points and achieve well.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. All the students agree that school is enjoyable. Their good behaviour and positive attitudes support that view. In almost all cases, students attend more often than they did in their previous schools and they generally stay in lessons. Some are occasionally reluctant learners, but their behaviour does not usually disrupt others. Students show good improvement in their personal development. In particular, they gain social awareness and begin to understand the needs of others and the idea of right and wrong. The citizenship curriculum extends their understanding of society. Students show a growing appreciation of the idea that actions have consequences and that the implications of choices should be thought through before making decisions. By creating situations in which students are required to make choices, and by analysing the consequences with them when the 'wrong' decision is made, the school makes an important contribution to students' preparation for leaving school.

Students grow in confidence as they experience and celebrate success, enabling them to express their views more competently, such as in the student council. This gives students a good opportunity to contribute to the school. They gain insight into the needs and feelings of others by contributing to wider communities, such as raising funds for the Teenager Cancer Trust. They learn about the features of different cultures and communities by acknowledging various festivals and through events such as multicultural dance sessions.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. The school takes good care of its students, both on and off-site. All of the required policies are in place and they take account of the latest national guidance. A high staffing ratio helps to maintain calm and the students confirm that they feel safe in school. They all agree that the school helps them to be healthy. Suspected bullying is pursued vigorously and serious incidents are recorded in detail, along with any sanctions that are applied.

Effective policies, procedures and systems are in place to safeguard students. Staff are trained to an appropriate standard, depending on their responsibility, in child protection and physical intervention techniques. Regular servicing of electrical and fire-fighting equipment and routine risk assessments contribute to maintaining a safe working environment. The school meets all requirements other than the need to maintain a correctly completed admission register, as not all of the required information is included. A detailed accessibility, disability, equality and inclusion

policy and action plan ensures that the school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended.³

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school vets prospective staff very vigilantly. It carries out all the required checks, including those with the Criminal Records Bureau, and it logs the outcomes in detail in individuals' files. It then transfers the required information into a single register that is maintained centrally. This is kept up-to-date and meets all requirements. The school is equally watchful in fulfilling its obligations regarding staff that it does not employ directly.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises provide a safe and effective educational environment and meet all requirements. The local authority has formally approved the recently completed building works. Taxis drop off students safely in the school grounds.

There are sufficient classrooms of adequate size for the registered number of students. They are light and well ventilated. Wooden block flooring throughout is mostly in a good condition, as is the general state of repair and decoration. There are appropriate facilities for students who are ill and sufficient washrooms for staff and students. There is limited outdoor play area, but it includes tables and chairs for students' use during recreation time.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

A detailed prospectus gives local authorities and the parents of prospective pupils all the information that the school is required to provide. In addition, this document lists the additional policies and procedures that parents can request to see. The school communicates effectively with local authorities, working closely with them in arranging annual reviews of students' statements of special educational needs.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school meets all requirements. Comprehensive and detailed procedures inform students and their parents how to register a complaint and how the process will be managed.

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_1

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations'), with the exception of the one listed below.⁴

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

- maintain an admission register 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 regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- ensure an appropriate level of challenge and expectation in all lessons with the aim of providing activities that result in independent learning
- ensure that all lesson planning makes full use of information from the marking of work to match tasks to students' needs.

⁴ www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

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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School details

Name of school	Cressey College		
DCSF number	306/6104		
Unique reference number (URN)	133438		
Type of school	Independent special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1 January 2010		
Age range of pupils	11–19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 7	Girls: 4	Total: 11
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 7	Girls: 3	Total: 10
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 1	Total: 2
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,050		
Address of school	Denmark Hall Denmark Road South Norwood Croydon SE25 5RE		
Telephone number	020 8655 2798		
Fax number	020 8655 2798		
Email address	info@cresseycollege.co.uk		
Headteacher	Adrienne Barnes		
Proprietor	Adrienne Barnes		
Reporting inspector	Mike Kell		
Dates of inspection	5–6 July 2010		