

Cruckton Hall School

Cruckton, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY5 8PR

Inspection dates

9–11 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and managers, including those responsible for governance, have taken effective action to improve the school. They have ensured that the school meets the independent school standards.
- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteachers, has created a positive ethos and an ambitious culture within the school. However, some of the new systems and structures to improve the school are not fully embedded.
- The quality of middle leadership has improved but the strengths found in English, mathematics and the sixth form are not as evident elsewhere.
- The sixth form provides a good quality of education for learners.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and tailored to meet individual needs. It is supported by a wide range of visits and purposeful outdoor activities.
- Opportunities to extend learning further through the '24 hour curriculum' are not fully developed.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved; some teaching is of the highest quality. Current pupils are making good progress in a range of subjects.
- In science and religious education the teaching and therefore pupils' progress is not as good as that found in other subjects.
- Outcomes have improved since the time of the last inspection. Pupils achieve an appropriate range of qualifications and move onto meaningful destinations.
- Literacy and numeracy are developed well in English and mathematics lessons but pupils do not read widely or often, routinely write at length or apply their mathematical skills in a range of other subjects.
- Safeguarding is effective and behaviour has improved considerably since the last inspection.
- Personal development and welfare and spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are promoted well within the school.
- Attendance has improved significantly over time but a few pupils are still absent too often.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - reviewing, refining and embedding the new systems and structures so that they continue to improve the quality of education provided by the school
 - making sure leaders thoroughly evaluate the use of additional funding such as the pupil premium
 - strengthening middle leadership so that all aspects of the school’s work are well led and managed.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring that:
 - all teaching, including that in science and religious education, matches the quality of the best found in the school
 - staff take opportunities to address literacy and numeracy in subjects beyond English and mathematics
 - pupils write at length in a range of subjects
 - pupils read widely and often
 - learning opportunities are maximised through the further development of the ‘24 hour curriculum’ and work experience in the sixth form
 - effective action is taken to increase attendance further and reduce the persistent absence of a few pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers, including directors, have taken effective action to improve the school. All the independent school standards are now met and the school provides a good quality of education.
- The headteacher has high expectations of herself, staff and pupils and has created an ambitious culture within the school. She knows the school's strengths and areas for development and has taken effective action to address the school's weaknesses.
- The headteacher and the deputy headteachers have created a positive ethos in the school. They have introduced a number of new systems and structures which now need time to embed fully.
- Staff morale is high. Teachers and teaching assistants value the support and training that they are given and leaders use performance management well to improve the quality of teaching. All staff are set targets linked to the school's priorities and improving the quality of education provided. The teachers' standards are also used to inform the targets of teachers. Leaders monitor the performance of staff closely and exceptional outcomes are rewarded.
- The quality of middle leadership has improved since the last inspection. English, mathematics and the sixth form are well led but the capacity of leadership in other areas is not as well developed.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and it is adapted to meet the needs of individual pupils. A wide range of outdoor activities, clubs and visits supports learning in classrooms. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has helped to improve pupils' outcomes and behaviour and it has promoted their personal development and welfare effectively. However, leaders have plans to further increase its impact by developing a '24 hour curriculum' in partnership with residential care professionals who are linked to the school.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and fundamental British values are actively promoted. Displays around the school and work in pupils' books reflect strengths in these areas. Messages are re-enforced in form time and pupils are encouraged to re-engage fully with their education so that they are effectively prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupil premium funding has been used effectively to support the education of a small number of pupils. Interventions have been put in place and equipment has been bought for individuals. However, school leaders have not fully evaluated the impact of these actions.
- Almost all parents who made their views known to inspectors would recommend the school and believe that staff are helping their children to improve their behaviour. Most parents believe that their child is happy and making good progress. Parents value the regular reports that are provided and believe that school staff communicate well with them.
- The school's website contains all the required information but it is not a true reflection of where the school is now. For example, some of the news stories are very old and recent developments are not celebrated.

Governance

- Directors from the Kisimul Group provide effective governance of the school. They have a wide range of skills and experience and offer appropriate support and challenge to leaders. Directors took decisive action to improve the school after the last standard inspection and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- Directors know the school well. They make regular visits and monitor all aspects of the school's work closely. The minutes of their meetings indicate that they focus upon the correct areas, ask challenging questions and follow up any unresolved issues at subsequent meetings.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has an up-to-date safeguarding policy on its website which takes into account the government's current requirements. There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe in the school.
- Staff are well trained and have a very clear understanding of what to do if they have a concern about the welfare of a pupil. Communication with parents, carers and local authorities is effective and outside agencies are informed of any concerns in a timely manner.
- Records are well kept and stored securely. Appropriate checks are made on staff and visitors and safeguarding arrangements at alternative providers are thoroughly examined.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved considerably since the time of the last standard inspection. Preparation is thorough and teachers consistently plan to meet the needs of individual pupils in lessons. Assessment is regular and accurate and used to inform planning.
- Teachers use a range of appropriate resources, including information and communication technology, and set learning in real-life contexts. They confidently adapt what they are teaching to engage pupils within a suitably flexible approach. Equality of opportunity is also actively promoted.
- Activities have a clear focus on learning that is shared with the pupils. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and staff work well together to help pupils make good progress.
- Staff use questions well to check understanding, assess learning, address misunderstandings and challenge pupils to make rapid progress. Feedback is swift and constructive and the school's marking policy is followed consistently.
- Learning time is used productively. Pupils settle to work quickly and often enjoy their lessons within a positive learning environment. Displays celebrate pupils' achievements and provide them with additional information to aid their studies.

- Staff use their positive relationships with pupils and secure subject knowledge to promote good progress. Learning in the classroom is supported by a wide range of outdoor pursuits such as bushcraft, climbing and forest school activities. Off-site learning is imaginative, safe and stimulating.
- Literacy and numeracy are developed well in English and mathematics lessons but pupils are not routinely given opportunities to apply their learning in different situations. Pupils do not regularly write at length in a range of subjects, read frequently or apply their mathematical skills in subjects other than mathematics.
- Not all teaching matches the quality of the best teaching that is found in the school. Where teaching is less effective, staff do not take opportunities to nurture independence or develop critical thinking. Pupils are not consistently given time to reflect on and develop their ideas, respond to advice or cooperate productively with other pupils. Until very recently, the improvements made in teaching and assessment in other subjects had not been evident in science. The teaching of religious education continues to be less effective than that found in other curriculum areas.
- Homework is set in line with the school's policy and the effective catch-up system allows pupils to complete their learning activities when required. However, leaders are aware that communication with care professionals needs to be enhanced to maximise learning opportunities across the whole provision.
- Parents are regularly given useful and accurate information about how their child is progressing across the curriculum. Many parents, who made their views known during the inspection, felt that they were given valuable information about how their child was progressing in school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. School staff regularly provide opportunities for pupils to develop their self-confidence and self-awareness and to enhance pupils' understanding of how to be successful learners.
- The curriculum is used well to promote personal development and welfare. Forest school work and comprehensive personal, social and health education cover important issues including those related to developing positive relationships, and keeping healthy. Physical and emotional well-being are also effectively promoted through regular exercise, outdoor pursuits and counselling, as required.
- Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility; they can become members of the school council and they are given time to reflect on the consequences of their actions. Pupils are also taught how to make informed choices. For example, they have personalised some of the work spaces in the school and many select healthy options when they are choosing what to eat.

- Pupils' learning is deepened by new experiences and opportunities to work with others. For example, some pupils have bought bus tickets and travelled on public transport and many have taken part in a graffiti workshop to paint an area of the school. However, there are times when pupils' independence is not allowed to develop fully as they rely on close staff supervision for their learning.
- Pupils are taught to stay safe when using the internet and appropriate controls are in place. They learn to use equipment safely and the curriculum covers how to stay safe at home and in the outside world in detail. Consequently, the pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they knew how to stay safe and that they felt safe in school.
- Incidents of bullying have reduced since the last inspection and staff are quick to tackle the use of derogatory or aggressive language. Pupils are helped to understand the meaning and impact of words and pupils are taught to be more tolerant. The effective promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is helping pupils to become more reflective and to understand differences between people.
- The promotion of personal development, behaviour and welfare of the few pupils who attend alternative provision is good. Pupils are safe and well supported when they are attending learning activities away from the main school site.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. School staff have worked effectively with pupils to help them to improve their conduct and self-discipline. Effective behaviour management techniques are used consistently.
- Staff positively re-enforce good behaviour and respond quickly and appropriately when issues arise. As a result of effective behaviour management training for staff and clear expectations of pupils, the number of incidents of inappropriate behaviour is declining. Physical intervention is now needed less frequently. However, when reasonable force is required, it is used appropriately and recorded thoroughly.
- During the inspection, there were few incidents of poor behaviour and the school was calm during social times. Staff, pupils and parents all commented upon the improvements in behaviour since the last inspection. There are also some pupils whose behaviour has improved markedly.
- Attendance over time has improved and pupils value the 'in to win' system that rewards them for being in the right place at the right time. There are many pupils whose attendance has improved considerably, but a few are still absent too often.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes have improved significantly since the time of the last standard inspection. Pupils have achieved a range of accredited qualifications, including higher grades at GCSE level, across the curriculum. The most able pupils gained a significant number of A* to C examination grades in a range of subjects last year.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points in many subjects, including English and mathematics. Current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress in all subjects in every year group.

- In some subjects, for example English, mathematics, art, music and drama, pupils make rapid progress. However, this accelerated progress is not matched in other areas of the curriculum such as science and religious education.
- The education provided by the school meets the needs of individual pupils and appropriate interventions are in place to help those who need to fill gaps in their learning. Pupil premium funding, when available, has been used effectively to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils are given the opportunity to read in lessons and in tutor time. Pupils can use phonics skills to decipher unfamiliar words and some pupils read challenging texts. However, the choice of reading materials available in the school is not comprehensive and pupils are not routinely encouraged to read widely and often.
- There is evidence of pupils making sustained progress in their social and emotional development and behaviour is improving. However, the way in which leaders record and monitor this progress is not as refined as the systems to chart academic progress. Leaders have identified this as an area for development.
- Strong careers advice and guidance has ensured that all current pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education or employment and training. As a result, every Year 11 pupil in the school has destinations in place that meet their career plans. The work of the transition adviser is having a positive impact throughout the school.

Sixth form provision

Good

- The relatively new sixth-form provision is led and managed well. All the relevant independent school standards are met and the individual 16 to 19 study programmes meet requirements.
- Individualised programmes of study build upon prior learning and prepare sixth formers effectively for future training and education. Learners follow a range of appropriate vocational and academic courses and their progress is tracked against aspirational targets. This process informs targeted intervention when required and helps to ensure that all learners make good progress.
- Teaching, learning and assessment support and challenge learners to make good progress. Positive relationships, good use of questioning and all staff working productively together help learners to achieve well.
- Learners follow appropriate English and mathematics qualifications, including GCSEs, and all take part in useful work-related learning activities. However, leaders acknowledge that work experience could be expanded further to prepare learners fully for the world of work.
- Learners are given high-quality careers advice and guidance, complemented by effective support during transition to the next stage of their education, training or employment. As a result, retention rates are high and almost all learners have meaningful destinations in place for when they leave the provision.

- Learners usually behave well in the sixth form and personal development and welfare are promoted effectively. Staff help to develop learners' independence and the comprehensive spiritual, moral, social and cultural development programme helps to prepare learners effectively for life in modern Britain.
- Safeguarding is effective and learners are taught how to stay safe. However, although overall attendance is improving, a small number of learners are absent too often.
- Leaders are aware that closer work with care professionals could enhance the learning of those who attend the sixth form. School staff work with residential care staff to ensure consistency in promoting learning and exploring any issues or concerns. However, the '24 hour curriculum' to further improve learners' progress is not fully developed.

School details

Unique reference number	123619
DfE registration number	893/6017
Inspection number	10033564

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Independent residential special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	8
Proprietor	Kisimul Group Ltd
Chair	Margaret Hill
Headteacher	Jo Burdon
Annual fees (day pupils)	£90,143
Telephone number	01743 860206
Website	www.cruckton.com
Email address	Jo.burdon@cruckton.com
Date of previous inspection	9–11 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school was judged to be inadequate at the time of its last standard inspection in June 2015. Subsequently, it had a progress monitoring inspection in January 2016, an emergency monitoring inspection in March 2016 and an integrated emergency inspection in October 2016. The school's action plan to address the unmet standards was judged to be acceptable in March 2017.

- The school is owned by the Kisimul Group, which runs two other similar schools in England. The group employs a number of directors for different aspects of the schools' work including education, safeguarding and health and safety. The directors also provide governance for the school.
- There have been significant changes in senior leadership since the last standard inspection. The current headteacher joined the school in February 2016 and led the school with the interim headteacher, who had been put in place soon after the last inspection, for a short period of time. The current headteacher has been substantive headteacher since April 2016 and both deputy headteachers left the school in July 2016. A new deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2016. An interim deputy headteacher joined the school in November 2016.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Almost all have a history of severely challenging behaviours and many have not attended school regularly for some time.
- All pupils have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and associated conditions. Pupils have diagnoses of Asperger's syndrome, attachment disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder and pathological demand avoidance.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small number of pupils are children looked after. The school receives pupil premium funding for very few pupils.
- The sixth form opened on a satellite site in September 2016. A few pupils attend this provision on a full-time basis.
- The school uses alternative provision for a very small number of older pupils. A few sixth formers attend Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology or Telford College of Arts and Technology on a full or part-time basis. Pupils of different age groups also visit specialist off-site facilities with staff from the school. These provide opportunities for pupils to take part in a range of activities including outdoor pursuits, forest schools work and equine therapy.

Information about this inspection

- The Department for Education commissioned Ofsted to consider, as part of the standard inspection, the school's progress in meeting the independent school standards that were judged to be unmet at the previous inspection.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, other leaders and staff, and four directors.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally and formally and made 25 short visits to lessons. The lead inspector visited the sixth-form centre and a team inspector observed learning at the off-site forest schools provision. Pupils' work was also scrutinised and 35 responses to the staff questionnaire were analysed. The views of parents were considered through parental responses to the school's questionnaire and five free-text comments on Parent View.
- Various school documents were examined, including the school's self-evaluation, and its improvement plan, plus information about managing teachers' performance and staff training records. Minutes of meetings of the directors and senior leaders were scrutinised and information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety was also considered. Inspectors looked at published information on the school's website before and during the inspection.

Inspection team

Simon Mosley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Catherine Crooks	Her Majesty's Inspector
Elizabeth Ellis-Martin	Ofsted Inspector

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