

Cressey College

Denmark Hall, Denmark Road, South Norwood, London, SE25 5RE

Inspection dates 6–8 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Outstanding	1
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Individualised programmes address the specific learning and behaviour needs of each student, enabling them to make at least good progress.
- The detailed behaviour policy is implemented extremely effectively and this enables students who enter the college with very challenging behaviour to develop significantly more positive attitudes over time.
- An excellent range of accredited courses, supported by effective teaching, enables all students to gain qualifications that reflect their potential and which challenges them to do their best.
- The differing provision at each of the four sites enables the school to match provision with individual student needs, while sixth form provision is effective in preparing students for the next phase in their lives.
- Since the last inspection, the college leaders have successfully focused on promoting positive learning outcomes for students and empowering staff to be able to support these needs through good professional practice.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Not all teachers make the fullest use of data to promote student progress, or use marking and assessment well enough to support students in doing their very best.
- While links with other local schools are developing well, there is still room to develop these further to support both student and staff development.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was undertaken with 24 hours' notice. Nine lessons and nine teachers were observed at the four sites and students' work was looked at.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, school and curriculum leaders, students, teaching and non-teaching staff, the headteacher of the local authority's special school, and representatives of local authorities who place students at Cressey College.
- Written evidence, including evidence about the learning and progress made by students, schemes of work, lesson planning and students' education and behaviour plans were examined.
- Views of staff, students, carers and associated professionals were taken into account.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cressey College is a school for male and female students between the ages of nine and 19 years who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, the whole range being currently represented. It is based on four separate sites in the London Borough of Croydon, each with its own area of expertise. There are currently 55 students on roll and the school is registered for a maximum of 85.
- Many students have additional and complex needs, including autistic spectrum disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and all have a statement of special educational needs.
- The ethnic background of students reflects that of the local community with no students currently speaking English as an additional language.
- Students have histories of fragmented previous education. Some have been out of school in the period prior to joining the school.
- The school aims to provide a safe and secure environment where an appropriate individual curriculum and behaviour plans support re-engagement with learning and formal education within a supportive framework.
- Since last September, the school has started to provide alternative provision for local mainstream secondary schools and is looking to expand this provision, which currently only exists at the site that provides girls' education.
- The last inspection of the school was undertaken in July 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate students' progress by enabling all teachers to:
 - become as good as the best in maximising the use of data to promote the greatest possible progress of students
 - use marking as a tool to show students how their work might be improved further and help them meet challenging targets.
- Further develop links with local special and mainstream secondary schools in order to:
 - maximise the impact of the professional expertise that exists to support students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in the locality
 - support teachers' professional development and expertise, including their ability to standardise and level work produced by students
 - extend the recent development of alternative provision being offered to local secondary schools in vocational opportunities for students who display challenging behaviour in mainstream settings.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Achievement is good as the result of an outstanding curriculum and good teaching. The college successfully meets the learning needs of all students, including those in Year 11 or in the sixth form who are preparing for the next phase in their lives. Students are very well supported so that from their very low starting points, often the result of severely disrupted prior education, they make strong and sometimes outstanding progress, and achieve well. By the time they leave, there is an expectation that students will have achieved qualifications. The work they undertake leads to GCSE and Entry Level certificates, and Open College Network vocational qualifications.

Individual education and behaviour plans individualise provision for each student. These are reviewed termly and set beside the academic progress being made. This is now being tracked more effectively through a software program that monitors small steps in progress. At the moment, not all teachers are as skilled as the most effective in making the most of the potential that this provides. School leaders collate whole-school progress data which shows there is no difference in the performance of any identified groups, such as boys and girls, or students from minority ethnic backgrounds.

There is a focus on delivering the National Curriculum, modified to ensure that it meets individual needs. This ensures that all appropriate areas of study are covered, with a clear focus on English and mathematics. Reading is promoted well and there are good opportunities to participate in the arts. This also is the case with physical education, which is supported through effective use of local leisure facilities. Wider life skills are promoted well and this is very effective in helping some students, such as those with autism, to develop their understanding of the wider world and to participate in it.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

The behaviour and personal development of students is outstanding and supported by a well-developed and effective scheme for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This framework supports students in becoming far more positive in their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence from when they joined the college. Over time students learn to moderate and take responsibility for their own behaviour. As a consequence, they are far better able to learn and to start fulfilling their potential in ways that have not been possible in the past. Their attitudes, relationships with others and attendance at school are often transformed. As a result, they are able to reflect on their role and contribution to the society of which they are a member, as well as the wider nature of that society. There is a strong focus on developing positive ideas around tolerance and the creation of a positive society. This is true of the school society as well as that of the wider community in which they live. Effective lessons in personal, social and health education promote this throughout the school and from discussion with students it is clear that they develop a positive understanding of other faiths and cultures. They appreciate that they live in a multi-cultural community and give some good examples of the benefits that this can bring.

Local authorities place pupils here because they feel the small size of the college, together with the focus on providing highly individual packages that address specific needs, enables students to be successful. They feel that the success achieved with the most challenging of students is a reflection of the great expertise that is available within Cressey College.

Care and attention is given to supporting the emotional as well as the academic development of every student. At the end of each day staff gather to review the behaviour and achievement of every student which is logged and, over time, gives a clear picture of the improvement that takes place. This provides highly convincing evidence of the outstanding progress that students make in

improving their behaviour and also to helping them appreciate the importance of regular attendance, so that for many attendance is good. Where this remains a challenge, often because a student has not long joined the school, great efforts are made to bring about improvement. Over time this leads to improved attendance which underpins the ability to maximise academic learning. Because the school is reflective and encourages students to think about their own actions, the older students talk in a mature way about the ways in which the college has enabled them to transform their attitudes and behaviour, and to become much more positive. This is acknowledged by other professionals working with these young people. A recent letter from a Head of Children's Services commented: 'We have consistently received excellent feedback from social workers and professionals edifying the quality of the work you provide to our young people. Staff at Cressey consistently go above and beyond what would be expected and as result we have seen very positive outcomes for those young people.'

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good and some is outstanding. This supports students in re-engaging with learning and making rapid progress throughout the school and in each key stage, including the sixth form. From initial baselines in English and mathematics, teachers track progress termly and set challenging targets for learning and behaviour, to which students respond positively. Teachers and support staff work together effectively, and display empathy and understanding. They never give up in their determination to help every student to be successful. Staff have high expectations and, in the best lessons, engage students through effective questioning. This enables students to reflect on their work, expand their thinking and demonstrate understanding. Detailed lesson planning not only ensures that lessons have clear objectives and expected outcomes but also encourages teachers to be reflective on the extent to which each lesson has been successful. Teaching is supported through well-equipped classrooms, including specialist equipment that supports the vocational courses being developed.

Marking is undertaken regularly and there is a lot of discussion with students about their work and progress, always seeking to boost confidence and develop positive attitudes. The best marking gives clear guidance in what students need to do in order to improve work and achieve goals, although there is some inconsistency in how well this is implemented.

There is increasing collaboration between the college and a nearby local authority special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social needs which is developing professional expertise. There is a commitment to seeking to extend this collaboration to maximise the expertise of staff in both schools. Similarly, Cressey College has recently extended its own vocational education provision and offers alternative placements for local secondary schools who find the engagement of some students to be challenging. The college is looking to expand this provision and extend its collaboration.

Quality of curriculum

Outstanding

What makes the quality of the curriculum outstanding is the way in which, while based on the National Curriculum, it is individualised in response to the specific learning and behavioural needs of every student. This is also reflected in the way that each of the four sites has developed specific areas of expertise. One site is for students who find it very hard to work alongside others, another meets the needs of students who are potentially very vulnerable, a further site meets the specific needs of female students, while the fourth addresses the needs of students who are able to work collaboratively in small group settings in making academic and social progress. Overall, it enables the college to meet a wide range of extremely challenging needs very successfully, which is demonstrated effectively in the final outcomes of students. Those who arrive late in their school careers are encouraged to remain in post-16 provision so that the college has more time to work with them.

At the heart of the curriculum is the need to develop skills in English and mathematics, and to

ensure that the gaps in students' prior knowledge and understanding caused by previously fragmented patterns of education can be filled. There is also a focus on emotional and social development for which the personal, social and health education programme is often a highly effective tool. While no two students receive the same curriculum, all follow a balanced programme that includes opportunities to develop interests in wider areas, including science, the arts and physical activity. All the required areas of learning are covered. The increasing number of vocational opportunities, alongside extra-curriculum activities that include residential opportunities, develop students' interests and engagement, supporting wider social and emotional development as well as promoting learning. Physical education is also promoted effectively and good use is made of local sports facilities as well as the schools own facilities, which includes the provision of showers at each of the sites. Physical and sporting activities engage students and they participate well, reflected in a session based around boxing routines observed in a local sports centre. Students benefit from a specialist careers adviser who has expertise in working with students with challenging backgrounds. Wider learning is well supported by other professionals who work at the college, including speech and occupational therapists and an educational psychologist. In its entirety, the curriculum helps many students to transform their lives through becoming active participants in learning, often for the first time in many years.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety**Good**

Provision for welfare, health and safety is good, including arrangements for child protection. All the independent school regulations for this standard are met. Recruitment procedures are good and nobody is allowed to take up a post until enhanced checks are completed. Details are kept, as required, in a single central register. Staff receive appropriate training at the required levels, including training in safe recruitment and child protection procedures. Students say they feel very safe at school. They appreciate the positive part played by staff who act as positive role models. Staff take care to ensure the safety of students, including working alongside other professionals and with the local authorities who place students at the school.

All the required policies are in place, including those for health and safety, dealing with and preventing bullying, discipline, first aid, recruitment and child protection. They are well written, understood and implemented effectively by staff and reviewed regularly. Where appropriate they are also understood by students. For example, the behaviour policy is based firmly around rewards and sanctions, and clearly valued and supported. There have been no permanent exclusions, and fixed-term exclusions are rare and diminishing. Students are made aware of bullying in all its forms and why it is never acceptable. The premises are maintained in good conditions and risk assessments ensure the safety of the accommodation. Good links with other agencies and with the placing local authorities support the care and well-being of students.

Leadership and management**Good**

The quality of leadership and management is good and has developed since the last inspection. The headteacher brings a clear vision and has strong support from staff throughout the college. She leads by positive example. The role of site leaders has developed and now sees them taking a more executive role that includes responsibility for the budget for their site. Similarly, the role of subject leaders is developing so they are becoming better able to play a direct role in the promotion of effective teaching and learning in their specific areas across the sites.

Leadership plays a strong role in supporting staff so that they develop their professional expertise and ability to support their students in their learning and behavioural needs. In turn, this has a direct impact on helping students to be successful. Clear procedures are in place for monitoring the performance of staff and identifying areas for professional development. Self-evaluation is very effective, so the school knows itself well and is able to show that it meets all the independent school standards. It also enables effective prioritisation of areas for development, such as the various links with local mainstream schools.

All the necessary information is made available to parents, carers and others. This includes details of the complaints procedure, although no complaints have been made. The premises at each site support effective education and accessibility plans are in place in line with requirements. Arrangements for students who are taken ill, including the maintenance of first-aid boxes, are appropriate.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	133438
Inspection number	422750
DfE registration number	306/6104

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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	Special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	9–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Adrienne Barnes
Headteacher	Adrienne Barnes
Date of previous school inspection	July 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,050–£90,000
Telephone number	020 8655 2798
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