

The Crest Academy

Crest Road, Neasden, London NW2 7SN

Inspection dates

18–19 October 2016

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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal's tenacious leadership, ably supported by his senior leadership team, the local raising achievement board (RAB) and sponsor, has transformed this previously inadequate school.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. These aspects continue to grow in strength across the school, particularly in English, mathematics, religious education, physical education and business education.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to develop skilfully pupils' vocabulary in each subject. This is particularly successful in developing the language and writing skills of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL).
- Current pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and who speak EAL, make good progress across all key stages because of the good teaching and support they consistently receive.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School staff are vigilant in their work to support attendance and investigate dangers for vulnerable pupils including child sexual exploitation and extremism.
- Pupils' behaviour around school is good. They are respectful to adults and work well together. This makes a significant contribution to their learning. They value the range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer and this contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Governance is strong. Members of the RAB and the academy ambassadorial group (AAG) have played a key role in challenging leaders to improve the work of the school. They are highly visible in the life of the school and know it very well.
- Owing to historical underachievement, too few of the most able, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, attain the highest possible grades at GCSE. This is also true of those students in the sixth form entering A-level examinations.
- Teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to fully act upon their feedback. Consequently, pupils cannot always demonstrate that they have securely grasped identified errors before moving on in their learning.
- Leaders have worked hard to secure qualified, specialist staff in geography. The appointment of new staff has strengthened geography teaching and it is rapidly improving. However, some variation still remains in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of this subject.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders at all levels should ensure that:
 - more teaching, learning and assessment secure outstanding progress for pupils, while eliminating any progress that is not good, particularly in geography
 - pupils are given consistent opportunities to fully implement teachers' feedback in their work
 - attainment continues to rise across key stage 4 and in the 16 to 19 provision, particularly for the most able and disadvantaged most-able pupils, so that more attain the highest grades.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal has been instrumental in galvanising the whole school community behind a highly successful drive to create a good school. At the time of the previous inspection, boys and girls were segregated in all lessons. The principal has successfully managed to forge a school where girls and boys are educated harmoniously alongside one another. Pupils work well together regardless of gender. This significant change was managed very skilfully, ensuring that the community understood the rationale for this change.
- The whole school has been transformed into a calm and purposeful centre for learning. The principal has been resolute in driving change quickly, eradicating a culture of stubborn inadequacy.
- Leaders have successfully changed the culture of the school. They have benefited from sharp challenge and support from the RAB and the school's 'system leader' (an external consultant). All staff work together well to ensure that pupils achieve their full potential. As a result, the progress pupils make has improved significantly.
- Senior leaders have taken decisive action to eradicate underperformance. Teachers' performance management is robust and any weaknesses are quickly tackled. A comprehensive programme of professional development has been highly successful in developing the skills of staff, and focused so that pupils make good progress. Senior leaders and the sponsoring trust work well together to tailor this programme to the specific needs of staff in the school.
- The very small numbers of parents who responded to the inspection survey, Parent View, were positive about the school and its work. The school's own surveys show that around nine in every 10 parents are positive about the school, its leadership and their involvement in the life of the school. This represents a significant improvement from the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders rightly identified that the school's curriculum at the time of the previous inspection was not fit for purpose. There is a wide range of subjects offered throughout each key stage at the school. A broad range of academic and vocational qualifications are offered in key stage 4 and in the 16 to 19 provision. Senior leaders have raised expectations for staff and pupils while ensuring that careers guidance and support help pupils to make informed choices about their future education, training and employment.
- Middle leaders now effectively lead improvements and check the quality of learning and teaching in their areas of responsibility. They understand how pupils are performing in their subjects and have become increasingly effective at mentoring and coaching teachers. This is helping to further increase pupils' progress and address historical underachievement.

Governance of the school

- The school's local governing body has been replaced by a RAB and an AAG. At least every half term, all board members make a formal visit. Their challenge to leaders is highly focused and this has strongly driven improvement. They have a very clear understanding of their statutory responsibilities and ensure that these are carried out robustly. Board members have a clear understanding of how pupils are performing across the school. They also monitor students in the 16 to 19 provision to evaluate progress. Members ensure that additional government funding is used to good effect, for example that funds are spent on initiatives that have a proven track record of meeting the needs of pupils, such as small groups receiving additional teaching from teaching staff.
- The board has employed a 'system leader' who has further helped to check the work of the school. Her work has been very effective and ensures that no stone is left unturned in evaluating the effectiveness of the school. She has played a key role in supporting and challenging the board and leaders to improve the school.
- The AAG has been successful in ensuring that the views of parents and the community are considered, and responded to, while the school develops. Their opinions and feedback are valued and taken into account at each meeting of the RAB. The AAG effectively facilitates a two-way communication between the board, parents and the wider community.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders and members of the RAB have a clear understanding of their local area. They know and understand well the local safeguarding issues most likely to affect their pupils and students. Senior leaders have ensured that staff are regularly trained in all safeguarding issues, especially the most common local issues, such as gangs, child sexual exploitation (CSE), female genital mutilation (FGM), children missing from education (CME) and exposure to radicalisation. The work to keep pupils safe takes these issues fully into account.
- The designated officer for safeguarding works well with external agencies to ensure that pupils are as safe as possible. Leaders doggedly challenge agencies where concerns arise until there is a satisfactory resolution in terms of appropriate protection for individual pupils. This has been particularly important given the number of CME cases identified in the local area.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Nearly all teaching, learning and assessment are good across subjects and key stages, including in the 16 to 19 provision. Teaching in geography has taken longer to improve due to challenges in recruitment. However, this is now rapidly improving. There are growing pockets of outstanding provision, particularly in English, mathematics, religious education and business studies.
- Teachers' questioning during lessons probes and extends pupils' thinking and understanding of subjects. Pupils are encouraged to consider deeply and apply their skills.

- Pupils are expected to apply their English skills in all curriculum areas. This ensures that their work in lessons is of a consistently good standard, with suitable use of grammar and punctuation. Pupils are expected to speak in 'professional language' and are not allowed to use slang or colloquial words. As a result, pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress in their reading and writing.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge helps them identify when pupils have misconceptions in their learning. These are tackled during lessons, and revision takes place when necessary to overcome identified errors. However, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to fully respond to a teacher's feedback. Consequently, on a minority of occasions, they cannot demonstrate that they have securely understood feedback before moving on in their learning.
- Homework is regular and supportive of pupils' learning in lessons. Pupils take similar or equal pride in their homework as they do in their classwork. They are clear about the expectations of them and they work to achieve their potential.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are well supported. They are challenged to overcome the difficulties they encounter. Their language skills, particularly their subject-specific vocabulary, are systematically developed. This ensures that these pupils make as good progress as their peers nationally. Internal assessment information shows that these pupils are increasingly making more rapid progress than their peers in their learning.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium and additional funding for disadvantaged pupils are used effectively to deliver teaching programmes to improve English and mathematics. The school's assessment information demonstrates the positive impact of this funding in, for example, ensuring that eligible pupils rapidly develop a higher reading age to access the curriculum. This has been well supported by the school's strategy for 'drop everything and read' three times a week. Pupils' reading and writing skills progress rapidly because the promotion of a love of reading and correct use of English is a strength throughout the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils' attendance has risen significantly since the last inspection. Overall, attendance is now in line with the national average.
- The school's work to protect those who are vulnerable to harm is strong. It works well with external agencies and ensures that any concerns are quickly identified and dealt with.
- Year 7 pupils transfer into the school with careful support provided. A structured programme of induction is arranged, including a summer school which is greatly valued by pupils and parents. As a result, they quickly identify with the school's aims and values. New pupils, including those who arrive after Year 7, are supported well and quickly feel part of The Crest community.
- Leaders maintain a careful watch on the safety of those pupils who attend alternative provision. They ensure that the environment in which they learn is safe and that the culture of the setting is in keeping with The Crest's vision and values.

- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe at school and in their local community. They know the potential dangers of the internet and other possible issues that may cause harm, such as extremism or FGM.
- The school's curriculum and culture have ensured that pupils identify as British citizens and have a basic understanding of the values that bind people together as a community. They are proud of the school's cultural diversity. One pupil summed this up when they said, 'it doesn't matter who you are, or where you are from, if you come to our school you are part of The Crest family. We look after and care for each other.' Leaders have strongly developed pupils' understanding of tolerance, cooperation and well-being since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development plays a key role in creating the school's calm atmosphere. Pupils take turns, respect differences of opinion and believe that they are represented in the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The conduct of pupils around the school building and site is calm, orderly and polite. Lessons are rarely disturbed by poor behaviour and work in classes is characterised by a purposeful focus on learning. Pupils feel that expectations for behaviour are high and that leaders and staff apply rewards and sanctions consistently.
- Exclusions have been higher than the national average over time. These have rapidly declined, and continue to do so, as pupils respond to the school's culture of high expectations for behaviour and learning. These are now in line with the average for secondary schools nationally.
- Pupils say that instances of bullying are now rare. They understand procedures for reporting concerns about bullying, including bullying online and through the use of mobile devices. Pupils have confidence in staff and leaders to deal with issues when they arise.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils typically begin their time at The Crest Academy with attainment below or well below that of their peers nationally. Many pupils enter the school at various times during the year. They again have typically low levels of attainment and some have had limited experiences of formal education. Pupils, regardless of their starting points and ethnic heritage, are well supported and quickly make good progress in their academic and vocational learning.
- Pupils in key stage 3 are making good progress in their learning and are catching up with their peers nationally across the curriculum. Progress is particularly strong in reading, writing, grammar, spelling and punctuation, mathematics, science and computing.
- Pupils at key stage 4 are also making good progress across their areas of learning. They are making particularly strong progress in English, mathematics, business education and physical education. This good, and sometimes better, progress across the school is helping pupils catch up following historical underachievement. As a result, pupils are rapidly catching up with their peers nationally. Attainment is rising very quickly, though it is, overall, still lower than in the average secondary school nationally.

- Regardless of ethnic background, home language or starting point, pupils' progress in the 2016 GCSE examinations was overall above the national average. This is particularly true for those subjects with stronger teaching, learning and assessment. Despite these improved rates of progress, attainment is still below the national average. Leaders accept that overall attainment still needs to improve in the coming years, with more pupils attaining the highest grades in examinations.
- The most able, disadvantaged and the most able disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than their peers nationally. This is due to effective challenge and support for different groups and illustrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. Opportunities for pupils to attend university open days and consider their ambitions for the future are well developed. This is successfully helping many pupils aim high in their GCSE and A-level examinations.
- Pupils attending alternative provision make good progress which is similar to that of their peers in the school. Leaders carefully ensure that these courses continue to provide a good education that meets each individual pupil's needs.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similarly good progress as their peers, regardless of their starting point. Support is tailored well to individual needs and is regularly reviewed to ensure that it is having the necessary impact.
- Leaders have effectively nurtured a culture of reading across the school. Leaders and the librarian have worked hard to encourage pupils to enjoy books. This is successfully helping pupils, particularly in key stage 3, to explore reading for pleasure. Pupils are increasingly borrowing a wider range of books including, for example, Shakespeare, Anthony Horowitz and a range of non-fiction texts. This developing love of reading can be seen with the increasing use of the school library and pupils reading for pleasure around the school site.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership and management of the 16 to 19 provision are good. Students benefit from a broad and flexible curriculum, with a range of academic and vocational courses. Leaders have raised expectations of students successfully. Students are expected to study during free time and their work is closely checked to ensure good progress.
- Retention and progress of students in the past were poor. Leaders have successfully adapted the curriculum to match the needs of students. Students are able to consider their options and make informed choices, due to good-quality careers guidance and support. Consequently, retention rates and progress have improved significantly across all courses.
- Students receive good-quality and regular opportunities to consider and plan for their life beyond The Crest. Students value the advice and support they receive and a growing number of them are aiming for Russell Group universities, including Oxford and Cambridge. Last year around 85% of students gained a place at university.
- Students enter the 16 to 19 provision with low attainment. They have historically made progress that required improvement on academic courses, while making good progress on vocational qualifications.

- However, students in Years 12 and 13 are currently making good and often better progress across both academic and vocational qualifications. Despite this improved progress, their attainment is still not high enough, particularly for the most able and the disadvantaged most able students. Too few of them attain the highest grades in A-level examinations. Nevertheless, current data shows that this is rapidly improving over time.
- Students who are re-sitting GCSE in English and mathematics make good progress. More students than the national average attain grades A* to C when they retake their qualifications. This is due to the good levels of support, challenge and teaching they receive in the sixth form.
- Teaching, learning and assessment across 16 to 19 courses are strong. Teaching is challenging and students are given many opportunities to develop their speaking, listening and general literacy skills. This is preparing them well for the next stages in their education, employment or training.
- Behaviour is very positive and learning is focused. Students told inspectors that they felt safe. They could explain how they keep safe in the world beyond school and felt well prepared for life in London and beyond. Students are punctual, attend frequently and show a general commitment to their learning. Study areas are well used and characterised by focused learning. They take pride in their school and adhere to the school's expectations of 'professional dress'. This prepares them well for higher education or job interviews and the world of work.

School details

Unique reference number	135973
Local authority	Brent
Inspection number	10012854

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,148
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	248
Appropriate authority	The sponsor
Chair	Michael Wemms
Principal	Mohsen Ojja
Telephone number	020 8452 4842
Website	www.thecrestacademy.org
Email address	thecrestacademyinformation@E-ACT.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 January 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The Crest Academy is larger than the average-sized secondary school with 16 to 19 provision. It is sponsored by E-ACT.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average.
- Pupils are from a wide range of ethnic heritages and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is significantly above the national average.
- A small number of students attend alternative provision at Ashley College, The College of North West London, Catch 22 and Epic Learning.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- When the school was previously inspected in January 2015, it was judged to require special measures. Since then, Her Majesty’s Inspectors and Ofsted Inspectors have visited the school three times to monitor its progress. This was the fourth visit before it was converted to a full section 5 inspection.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school, including the 16 to 19 provision. Many of these were joint observations with the principal and senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to a group of Year 7 pupils read, and walked around the school site with a group of sixth-form students and a separate group of key stage 4 pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of pupils’ books from English, mathematics and science, in addition to reviewing pupils’ work in classrooms visited. Inspectors visited an assembly for Year 10 and form time before school began.
- Meetings and discussions were held with pupils both formally and informally, with the principal and his senior leaders, middle leaders, the chair of the AAG, the chair of the RAB, the regional education director from the sponsoring academy trust, the school’s external consultant and the school librarian.
- Inspectors scrutinised the 14 responses received to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, and the school’s recent Year 7 and Year 11 parent surveys.
- The inspection team reviewed a range of documentation including: the school’s pre-employment checks on staff; the school’s admissions register; documentation relating to children missing from education; records of the checks made by leaders on teaching, learning and assessment; the school’s own assessment information; minutes of meetings, including those of the RAB and AAG; and analysis of attendance, punctuality, exclusions and behavioural incidents.
- Inspectors considered the school’s arrangements for Year 7 catch-up funding and the pupil premium for disadvantaged pupils.

Inspection team

David Storrie, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Janet Shadick	Ofsted Inspector
Jude Wilson	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Sam Hainey	Her Majesty’s Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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