

Craig Croft Education Centre

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	134534
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	328925
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Charles Hackett

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	10
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Dorothy Wain
Date of previous school inspection	31 October 2005
School address	Bosworth Wood Campus Auckland Drive Solihull B36 0DD
Telephone number	0121 7884 444
Fax number	0121 7884 224

Age group	5–16
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2008
Inspection number	328925

Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to administration error

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The centre, although registered as a pupil referral unit (PRU), is a service for the local authority. It supports children in care throughout the borough, either through outreach support or, when necessary, with time within its teaching centre. It also has responsibility for monitoring the educational needs of children in care when placed in or out of county with independent providers. It has responsibility for coordinating the support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children within the borough. Since September, it has also taken responsibility for primary-aged pupils at risk of permanent exclusion. On occasions, it takes a few pupils who have been permanently excluded from a mainstream school. The length of time students are attached to the centre varies but most leave within six months.

(Please note for consistency the report refers to all children and pupils supported by the centre as students)

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Craig Croft is an exceptional PRU. Recognised as outstanding when inspected in 2005, it continues to provide excellent support for a range of vulnerable young people in Solihull. It champions the rights of all children in care. For example, the service goes to great lengths to ensure that those students placed with independent providers receive the right support to match their needs. There is very clear evidence that all groups of students supported by the service make outstanding progress in both their academic and personal development. This progress means that except for a very small number, who move out of the area, all students who spend time in the centre are successfully reintegrated into a mainstream or special school. Those few supported by the centre towards the end of their school careers successfully pass external examinations.

The children in care supported in mainstream schools by the service attain in line with their peers. This includes many achieving A levels. Of the recent children in care supported by the service, eight are currently attending university. Much of the success of the service is down to the very strong team ethos of the staff. Led by a headteacher who is passionate and committed to ensuring that the very best is provided, the staff provide inspirational support and guidance. 'Without this place I'd probably have had a baby and be into all sorts of drugs and alcohol', reported a student formally supported in the centre but now successfully placed in foster care and attending a local college full time.

The excellent care, support and guidance students receive is exemplified by the very strong emphasis the service gives to the personal education plans (PEPs) of students in care. Staff insist on them being rigorous to ensure that the students have every possible chance to succeed. The service has excellent links with other services and agencies and uses these extremely well to provide additional support for students. For example, through the service's links with an educational psychologist, assessments of students in care requiring statements can be completed without delay. Rigorous safety procedures ensure that the students are safe, and all know that if they have a problem staff are on hand to help.

The quality of teaching and learning and of the curriculum is outstanding. Relationships play a strong role in this. Students like and respect the staff and this means they want to do well and are keen to try different things. The curriculum is balanced very well to ensure that students focus on their basic skills yet also learn skills that will help them cope in mainstream. This includes work aimed at helping them to relate well with others and have a better understanding of how they should behave in school.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children benefit enormously from the work of the service. The programme they follow is both innovative and unique in the way it has brought different agencies together in one coordinated programme. Students in the group show how eager they are to learn. They report that the service helps them understand how to be safe and understand the different expectations of the British culture. 'We learn boys and girls are equal here,' reported one boy through his interpreter. Another was eager to give examples of things he had learnt that will help him stay safe, such as how to travel safely on public transport. The centre's staff have an extremely good understanding of its performance, although the actual recorded evaluation of its effectiveness is limited in extent. Plans, though, are in hand to address this. The outstanding leadership and management of the senior team is well supported by the

management committee. This group acts very much like a board of governors, holding the service to account through thorough reports and frequent visits to the centre.

What the school should do to improve further

- Complete plans to secure a more comprehensive written evaluation of the centre's effectiveness.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards on entry are usually below average, often because of the disrupted education students have experienced. The fact that almost all of these vulnerable students supported by the centre can successfully return to mainstream or join a special school demonstrates the excellent progress they make. They achieve the challenging targets set for them. In their time attached to the centre almost all make at least good progress in literacy and numeracy, with many making big increases in their reading ages. Their achievements mean that they can return to a mainstream setting confident they can keep up with their peers. For unaccompanied asylum-seeking children this can lead to them being able to pass GCSEs and, similarly, other children in care in Year 11 are able to successfully pass GCSEs and go on to further education, A-level success and in some cases university.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is excellent. This is demonstrated by the increased confidence they have in their self-worth. Students make very good improvements in their attendance and behaviour. A mother's comment that 'since being at the centre my son has behaved a lot better' is typical of the feedback from parents and carers. Given students' previous difficulties in these areas, this represents a major reason why their placement at the centre is having such a positive impact on their lives. Their economic well-being is addressed very well and, as a result, students leave with a very strong base of personal and academic skills to give them every chance to live successfully and independently. Students' outstanding progress in improving their social skills means they can enjoy returning to a mainstream setting or successfully moving to a special school. Records show that they develop good attitudes to learning. The excitement seen in a group of the primary students going on a visit to a forest school is a good example of this. Students' views are listened to carefully and they feel important members of the centre's community. Students say they feel extremely safe in school and this gives them the confidence to try tasks they would previously have avoided. Students gain an exceptionally good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. For example, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children stress how their course helps them understand how to live and eat healthily with little money. Primary students enjoy participating in the physical activities available, especially swimming and badminton, where they win awards for their efforts.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers work very closely with each student as an individual, constantly encouraging them to try different activities and develop their ideas. Relationships are extremely good and consequently students enhance their self-esteem and are highly motivated to learn. The progress of all students is monitored regularly; the service is constantly seeking the best ways to track progress. For those students in the centre full time, teachers' planning to meet their individual targets in each subject is meticulous, with excellent recorded evaluations of progress. Resources are good and used very well. Staff use praise and encouragement very well, including making helpful annotated comments on students' work. Excellent displays of students' work create a purposeful learning environment within the centre.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum for the different groups the service supports is very appropriate. It is very well designed to meet students' differing needs, so that no one is disadvantaged, and to increase their belief in themselves. Vulnerable primary-aged pupils follow a 'nurturing' approach designed to ensure they develop their basic skills and can return to mainstream schools confident they are not behind their peers. An excellent emphasis is put on developing the skills they will need to cope and do well in a mainstream or special school setting. The unaccompanied asylum-seeking children group follow a well-thought-out set of activities designed to give students a wide range of experiences and a clear understanding of the expectations of living in the UK. A very good emphasis is placed on understanding the cultural expectations here compared to those in their countries of origin.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The service ensures that students' emotional well-being is considered very carefully. The support for students' personal development is exemplary and succeeds in giving students in care an equality with other students. External agencies are used very well to add to the excellent work of the service's own staff. The outreach team ensure that all children in care within the local authority have positive educational experiences and achieve well. The promotion of the importance of effective PEPs plays a key role in this, as do the very good systems to record and track the progress of those students who spend time at the centre. Senior staff are very stringent in their duty to ensure that independent educational providers address the needs of the children in care placed with them.

Exemplary procedures are in place to ensure that students are safe. These include rigorous risk assessments and staff receiving regular training in child protection.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The service is led extremely effectively. The headteacher leads by example and has established a very committed team of professionals, all with a genuine determination to be effective in supporting the students. As a team they focus 'on the here and now' and show considerable flexibility in the range of strategies they will use to improve matters for each student. They have evidence, including numerous external reviews, that shows how the service has been effective, but internal written documentation to evaluate the centre's work is limited. Excellent links have been established with parents, carers and outside agencies. These links, and those with former students, very effectively promote community cohesion.

The management committee offer excellent support. They monitor the service's work carefully and promote its importance well with the local authority. Together with the senior staff they have shown that despite having previously been judged outstanding they have continued to develop the service. This clearly shows the service has the capacity to develop even further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 November 2008

Dear Students,

Inspection of Craig Croft Education Centre, Solihull B36 0DD

Thank you all for being so friendly when I came to visit the centre. I really enjoyed meeting you all and hearing about the exciting activities you take part in. The photographs of those of you who visited the forest school are a good example of how you enjoy your time at the centre.

My report judges the work of the whole service to be outstanding. I believe all the staff are very effective in helping you learn as well as supporting you to overcome the many difficult issues in your lives. As a result, you make excellent progress in your learning and your personal development. This means that many of you gain the skills to do well in a mainstream school.

The headteacher, all the other staff and the management committee are very determined that you will be very well supported. An example of this is the way they have developed the importance of your personal education plans to ensure that no matter what school you attend, you are not disadvantaged in any way. I know from your comments that those of you new to the country fully appreciate the programme put in place to help you understand the expectations of living in the UK.

The only recommendation I have made for the centre is to carry out its plans to consider and write down how well it is doing. I can see from what has been achieved since the previous report that staff are constantly looking at what they do and how they can best respond to the needs of all of you. You can do your bit to help by continuing to work hard and developing the social skills that will help you do well later in life.

Best wishes

Charles Hackett

Lead inspector