

# Cressex Lodge (SWAAY)

Cressex Lodge, Terrace Road South, Binfield, Bracknell, Berkshire RG42 4DE

## Inspection dates

4–6 July 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Satisfactory

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher is rightly highly regarded by both staff and pupils. She leads with a clear determination to provide pupils with the best educational opportunities. As a result, the school is improving and all of the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders gather a wealth of information about pupils' attainment. However, they do not analyse pupils' rates of progress in sufficient detail in order to increase the impact of their work on raising pupils' achievement.
- Staff morale is high. Adults are appreciative of the level of support they receive and are dedicated to the work of the school.
- The curriculum is well considered and serves as a means to reveal to pupils the range of possibilities that lie ahead. Many discover previously hidden aptitudes, such as in art. As a result, all pupils take appropriate next steps and successfully access further education.
- The proprietorial body meets regularly with senior leaders. However, its work to challenge fully the headteacher on pupils' academic performance is at an early stage.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. Pupils make good, and sometimes rapid, progress from their starting points. Consequently, pupils achieve well in a range of curriculum areas, including gaining a range of GCSE qualifications or other accreditations.
- Teachers and other adults are excellent role models and dedicated to meeting pupils' emotional and behavioural needs well. As a result, learning time is calm and pupils are supported closely to behave well. Adults' composed and consistent approach ensures that pupils quickly improve their social skills and develop reliable coping mechanisms.
- Pupils' understanding of modern British values is very secure. British values are prominent throughout the school's curriculum, including in citizenship lessons, and pupils benefit greatly.
- Safeguarding is effective. Nevertheless, occasionally, the school's designated lead does not always have all of the information she requires at her fingertips.
- Attendance is high. The majority of pupils attend regularly.

### 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?

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - members of the proprietorial body develop their understanding of the school's pupil performance information in order to provide greater challenge and support to school leaders
  - leaders make the best use of pupil performance information to demonstrate the impact of their work on accelerating pupils' progress, including that of groups such as pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - the roles and responsibilities of both designated safeguarding leads, one in care and one in education, are clearly defined and understood so that they have all the information they need in order to fulfil their responsibilities
  - the school's policy on the use of reasonable force is kept under regular review.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher asserts her vision unequivocally, stating that, 'Pupils deserve the absolute best and a suitable school experience.' Since the previous inspection, leaders have progressively improved the school, ensuring that the requirements of the independent school standards are met fully. Leaders have taken their time to ensure that the curriculum is balanced well and contains a broad range of subjects. They have also strengthened the quality of teaching and learning considerably and improved pupils' behaviour. Consequently, pupils achieve well and all leave the school having discovered new talents and following appropriate pathways.
- The cohesive staff team is fully united and supports the headteacher wholeheartedly. Staff appreciate the support on offer from senior leaders and also that of each other, recognising the significant emotional demands of their roles. One member of staff encapsulated the views of others saying, 'We are a very strong team and work hard to make the school the best it can be.'
- Other staff, including those who hold significant responsibility, contribute extremely effectively. For example, the school's special educational needs coordinator is instrumental in ensuring that pupils' individual needs, including for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are identified as soon as they join the school. Initial pupil assessments are comprehensive. The leader sets the bar high for what is expected in the future, demonstrating ambition for all pupils to fulfil their potential.
- Teachers receive constructive advice on a regular basis on how to improve their skills. They value the support on offer, particularly during bespoke sessions known as 'supervisions' with their mentor. The headteacher is a welcome presence in lessons, often insightfully observing and supporting staff, both formally and informally. Such encouragement ensures that pupils receive a worthwhile educational experience and all staff feel appreciated.
- Teachers and leaders all have appropriate targets in place and their performance is kept under regular review. However, the setting of challenging targets is at an early stage as some lack precision. This is because leaders' strategic use of school performance information, in order to raise standards further, is underdeveloped.
- The headteacher's vision to 'make pupils' school experience meaningful' strongly influences the school's curriculum. The range of subjects and activities on offer is broad and well suited to pupils' interests and future needs. A strong contribution is made to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the school's citizenship curriculum.
- Leaders' fastidious approach to curriculum design has ensured that modern British values interlace through all aspects of learning and bolster the curriculum significantly. The prominence of this aspect is mirrored strongly in many learning activities. For example, in English, pupils confidently compared the meaning of democracy in their recent head boy election with that of the election of Napoleon in George Orwell's 'Animal farm'.

- Leaders have begun to put effective systems in place to enable them to monitor pupils' behaviour and attainment. They rightly recognise that this information is useful and have started to analyse some of it. However, leaders and members of the proprietorial body, including the director, do not yet use this information enough to check, or improve upon, the impact of their work on pupils' progress, including that of significant groups.
- The school improvement plan reflects the headteacher's ambition to improve further the quality of education. Actions are appropriate and focused on developing the skills and expertise of staff. However, the use of pupil performance information is at an early stage. Consequently, the school's plan does not state precisely enough what success will look like.

## **Governance**

- The proprietorial body provides some challenge to senior leaders. For example, a director meets regularly with the headteacher to discuss matters relating to finance, care and staff training. Nevertheless, members do not yet provide the same level of challenge to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can. This is because there is a lack of expertise about school performance information and specific educational matters. In the past, the proprietorial body has wisely made use of external expertise, although it has not always responded promptly to the advice it receives. Further work is required in this aspect to ensure that the headteacher receives a greater level of support and challenge.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's safeguarding policy complies with the latest government legislation and is made available to parents via the school's website. Staff understand their responsibilities and know how to report their concerns to the school's designated safeguarding lead.
- Staff receive regular and comprehensive training, including the school's designated leads and also staff who are new to the school. As a result, staff are knowledgeable and able to recognise the signs and symptoms of a variety of issues that should cause concern, such as radicalisation.
- Leaders ensure that all staff are checked appropriately before commencing employment, including applying the procedures for overseas checks when necessary. Nevertheless, the school's designated person does not have to hand all of the information relating to the employment of school staff. Leaders need to ensure that two-way communication between both designated leads, including the head of residential care, is more explicit so that lines of accountability are clear-cut.
- The school works closely with a variety of outside professionals, including those who represent the youth offending service. Pupils' review meetings include feedback from all professionals. This ensures that pupils' universal development needs, including their awareness of personal safety, are kept under watchful review. Parents, as appropriate, and local authorities are kept well informed and regularly offer praise to the school on the timeliness and quality of its reporting.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils benefit greatly, with many acquiring essential skills to succeed in their future lives. Teaching over time is consistently good and many pupils achieve worthwhile qualifications, including GCSE qualifications. For many, pupils' strong attainment at the end of their schooling successfully broadens pupils' outlooks, revealing the pathway to further educational opportunities.
- Teachers have high expectations, know their pupils well and ensure that tasks are matched well to pupils' starting points. Teachers use their knowledge of individual pupils combined with their subject expertise well to move pupils forward in their learning. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson a pupil was encouraged to reason and apply his knowledge of directed numbers to find a square root successfully. Occasionally, teachers' questions do not always explore pupils' understanding in sufficient depth.
- Full-time supervised education is provided for all pupils and teachers use this opportunity well to generate trusting relationships with pupils. In return, pupils exhibit respect for adults and engage in learning activities positively. Some teachers are highly skilled in their subject areas. Such expertise sparks pupils' enthusiasm and so they concentrate well. For example, in an art lesson pupils were able to make choices, exploring a variety of media when making a Chinese dragon puppet.
- Teachers, including support staff, show a high degree of sensitivity when working with pupils. Adults prioritise pupils' social needs and develop pupils' grasp of how to be a respectable and responsible citizen. For example, in a citizenship lesson, pupils conducted a SWOT analysis of the school's head boy elections, reflecting maturely on the emotions associated with winning and losing. This enables pupils to prepare for greater independence and fuller integration into wider society, such as when they transfer on to college.
- Inspectors found that pupils' work is regularly marked and assessed in line with the school's expectations, with helpful feedback on what needs improving. As a result, pupils' misconceptions are addressed, which allows pupils to cement their understanding in a variety of subjects.
- Staff work closely with other experts, including speech and language professionals and occupational therapists. The curriculum prioritises the development of pupils' social skills. As a result, many pupils make good gains, including in their development of emotional resilience.
- Staff make some good use of resources to support pupils' learning. Activities are adapted appropriately so that all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. Many pupils begin to show aptitude for specific subjects such as music and art, instilling a more secure love of learning.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Staff take their one-to-one supervision responsibilities seriously and are highly observant of each pupil's needs. Consequently, the school's risk assessments are well considered and detailed. For example, during the inspection, some pupils visited the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts. Risk management strategies were appropriate and covered all necessary aspects including travel, the level of supervision and pupils' frame of mind. As a result, all pupils were kept safe, able to delight in the art on display, and return to school motivated and inspired to achieve well.
- Many pupils join having experienced trauma and disruption to their schooling. When pupils start at Cressex Lodge, they are eased into school life and supported well to adjust. Pupils' transition both into and out of the school is well supported, including by therapists.
- The school implements well-developed strategies effectively to rebuild pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence as some pupils suffer with depression and fragile mental health. Leaders adopt a 'repair approach' and successfully grow pupils' resilience and sense of self-worth. Staff are proud of their work, with one member of staff commenting, 'It is a privilege to be part of the development of these very vulnerable young people and to witness them flourishing as they mature and grow.'
- Staff appreciate the support they receive from the headteacher in managing pupils' complex behavioural needs. One member of staff commented, 'The headteacher has an excellent rapport with pupils.' This was also highly evident during the inspection. Pupils eagerly latched on to every opportunity to engage in conversation with the headteacher about a range of topics linked to their studies.
- Pupils engage well in learning, responding appropriately to the challenges set. The school's reward system is understood and pupils try hard to achieve their best. By adopting a 'negotiation and repair' stance, adults award pupils stars when they fully engage. As a result, pupils try hard to stay on track and learn well.
- Leaders have worked determinedly to ensure that the school buildings are safe, fit for purpose and support their educational aims. For example, leaders have installed a pull-up bar outside in order to provide pupils with a worthwhile physical activity at breaktimes. Equally, they have prioritised keeping pupils safe, for example by installing window closures throughout the school. Pupils' safety is kept under regular review. Classrooms are safe, purposeful workspaces.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values are promoted well. For example, pupils recently gained tremendous insight into the value of democracy participating in head boy elections. Pupils were able to present their manifestos, listen to candidates debating issues and keep track of the predicted outcome with regular poll forecast updates. Such attention to detail broadens pupils' experience and supports their understanding of modern British society.
- Pupils say they feel safe. They have confidence in the adults who care for them. Incidents of bullying are occasional and staff offer full support to ensure that such incidents are not prolonged. As a result, pupils generally get along well with one another.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

- The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly. Most reside in one of the school's children's homes. The handover between residential care and school is managed well. As a result, attendance is consistently high. Very few pupils are absent.
- Many pupils join the school in a state of turmoil, distress and displaying high levels of anxiety. Pupils settle in and gain refuge as they acclimatise to the school's expectations. Gradually over time, pupils develop a keen sense of belonging, as evidenced in their excellent attendance. They form friendships and older pupils are keen to ensure that younger pupils settle well and feel welcomed. Consequently, a tangible spirit of community strongly permeates the school day.
- Leaders do not exclude students. When incidents occur, staff show skill and expertise, applying the school's breakaway techniques to dispel tension successfully. However, if for particular pupils the proportion of serious incidents increases, leaders are quick to convene the support of wider professionals. In some cases, the placing local authority is served notice and the pupil's placement is withdrawn. The headteacher is not afraid to speak out if she believes the school is not making a positive difference to improving outcomes for pupils. Leaders are highly alert to ensuring that the school always meets pupils' complex needs effectively.
- Pupils are attentive in lessons and show a high degree of independence and self-motivation. Teachers are proficient at keeping an oversight, encouraging pupils to sustain their concentration and address tasks with care. Praise is common place. For example, in an art session pupils who were a little hesitant were encouraged to retain focus as the teacher commented, 'I knew you would get this. You're better than me!'
- The headteacher keeps meticulous records of pupils' behaviour. Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant reduction in the number of serious incidents. The relaxed ethos throughout the school epitomises this accomplishment. For example, breaktimes are relaxed and sociable occasions. Adults and pupils chat openly, enjoying one another's company beyond the classroom.
- All pupils are supervised closely throughout the whole school day and in all activities, including social times. Adults are always present and staff are trained in breakaway techniques rather than the use of reasonable force. This enables staff to manage day-to-day situations well, allowing pupils space and time to self-regulate their emotions and calm down as required. However, very occasionally in the past, staff have appropriately utilised reasonable force techniques to prevent pupils causing harm to themselves or others. Leaders acknowledge that in exceptional circumstances it may be useful to reconsider the school's view and ensure that staff are aware of how to use such recognised techniques safely.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Many pupils join the school troubled and disengaged from education. Pupils are quickly offered support from a range of sources, including that of experienced therapists. As a result, pupils are able to access learning activities successfully and make good and sustained progress from their starting points in English, mathematics and other subjects. In some instances, pupils' progress is excellent, particularly in art.

- Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and children looked after, quickly get to grips with each next step and make good gains in a range of subjects. All pupils go on to achieve accreditations and many gain GCSE qualifications by the end of Year 11, including in mathematics and English. This represents strong progress from pupils' starting points. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers.
- All Year 11 pupils leave the school set firmly on an appropriate pathway. This is because they are well prepared and guided skilfully on to the next stage of education. Some pupils leave to study advanced level courses and others pursue a more vocational pathway, choosing options such as hairdressing or construction.
- Pupils make good progress in developing their mathematical skills in shape, space and measure, data handling and number work. Some pupils attain highly, achieving A\* to C grades in GCSE mathematics.
- Equally, pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in English. Pupils have regular opportunities to write for a range of purposes including composing poems, analysing famous texts and creating stories. They transfer their skills with ease to other subjects and generally write in a fluent and cursive style. Pupils' ability to sustain concentration and write more extended pieces quickly improves when they join. As a result, pupils make good progress in this aspect.
- Pupils make superb progress in art and all achieve a range of accreditations in this subject. Some achieve high standards. For example, in 2016 one pupil attained an A\* in their GCSE examination. During the inspection, pupils were able to tell inspectors how their artistic skills, using a range of media, had greatly improved since joining the school. Pupils are rightly proud of their accomplishments in this subject.
- Over time, pupils make excellent progress in the development of their social skills. This is because pupils quickly develop confidence in adults who care for them. Learning time is often punctuated with appropriate moments of humour as pupils and adults are perfectly at home in each other's company. Moments of interruption are rare as the number of serious incidents has reduced dramatically since the previous inspection.

## School details

Unique reference number	110178
DfE registration number	867/6580
Inspection number	10006109

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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 17
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Les Glazier and Gerard Berry, SWAAY Child and Adolescent Services Ltd
Director	Julian Dunn
Headteacher	Sarah Snape
Annual fees (day pupils)	£47,050.64
Telephone number	01344 862221
Website	<a href="http://www.swaay.co.uk">www.swaay.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@swaay.co.uk">info@swaay.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	26–27 September 2012

## Information about this school

- Cressex Lodge (SWAAY) is an independent school for boys located in a village near Bracknell. It operates collaboratively as part of a therapeutic community provided by SWAAY Child and Adolescent Services Ltd that includes six children's homes, operational for 52 weeks of the year. Most pupils reside in the company's children's homes.
- The school opened in 2006 and it is registered for up to 18 boys, aged between 11 and 16 years, who have specific behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties. Pupils join the school with a history of interrupted schooling and generally remain at the school for approximately two years.

- There are currently 15 boys on roll aged between 13 and 17 years, some of whom have moderate, specific and complex learning difficulties. The vast majority of pupils have been placed by their local authority. Approximately 11 local authorities use the school to place pupils.
- Approximately half of the school's population are in receipt of an education, health and care plan as they are pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school was last inspected in September 2012 when it did not meet all of the independent school standards. In February 2013, November 2013 and July 2014 the school received three progress monitoring visits and was found to not meet all the independent school standards including those relating to the curriculum.
- The school aims to 'provide each pupil with an education for life, by valuing and respecting them as individuals, developing their self-esteem, relationships and attachments, encouraging their individual abilities to their full potential in a caring and orderly environment'.
- The school does not use alternative providers.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a variety of lessons, mostly jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading during lessons.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work and records of achievement.
- Inspectors considered the 11 responses to the pupil survey and one response from a parent to Ofsted's Parent View online survey. Inspectors also considered 16 responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors met with staff, including those who hold significant responsibilities, including the school's special educational needs coordinator and the senior teacher with responsibility for the school's curriculum. Meetings were also held with the headteacher, a proprietor, a director and five members of staff.
- Inspectors reviewed the checks made on staff in relation to their suitability to work with children.
- Inspectors analysed a range of school documentation including information about pupils' achievement, the school's improvement plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. Inspectors considered the headteacher's own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.

## Inspection team

Elizabeth Farr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paul Metcalf

Ofsted Inspector

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