

# The Clare School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121261
<b>Local Authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	380194
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Lewis

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	94
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	16
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Judi Holdway
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nigel Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	South Park Avenue Norwich NR4 7AU
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 18 lessons and saw 15 teachers, as well as the work of the teaching assistants. Meetings were held with school leaders, groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and analysed records of pupils' achievement; progress data; and a range of school management documents, including policies and records for ensuring the safeguarding of pupils. They scrutinised 52 parental questionnaires, 23 from pupils and 32 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well do pupils progress in relation to their more specialist needs including their self-management, their communication and independence, and making their voice heard?
- How do the schools' specialist school provision and extensive partnerships, including therapy provision, and the ways in which it caters for their medical needs enhance pupils' learning and well being?
- How good is the sixth-form provision, including its accommodation, and how well does this enable pupils' transition to the next stage of their education?

## Information about the school

The Clare School is an average-sized mixed community special school for pupils aged 3 to 19 years of age with complex needs, usually associated with physical disabilities, complex medical needs and/or sensory impairment. Pupils are drawn from a wide catchment area across Norfolk. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and a small-but-increasing proportion have been diagnosed with degenerative, life-limiting conditions. The overwhelming majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A much higher-than-usual proportion is known to be eligible for free school meals.

The school has had specialist school status (SEN physical and sensory) since September 2009. It is co-located with an infant and junior school and is part of the City of Norwich High School cluster. In conjunction with the Norfolk consortium of complex needs schools, it provides an outreach service giving 'school-to-school' support. The school holds a number of national and local awards, including Healthy Schools status, Quality in Study Support – Established Mark, High Quality Physical Education (PE) Charter mark, and Excellence in Enterprise Education.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

This is an exceptional school which provides outstanding education and the highest level of care, guidance and support for its pupils and their families. Parents and carers praise every aspect of the school's provision, using words such as 'wonderful' and 'brilliant' to describe its work and staff, and saying their children have achieved things they never thought possible. Pupils' achievement is indeed excellent, whatever their particular learning needs, because the school is so skilled at tailoring the learning programmes to these. Whether they enter in the nursery or later in the school, children are given memorable learning experiences that motivate them to learn. Outstanding teaching and learning in lessons are coupled with excellent integration of pupils' therapy support and provision for their sensory needs in classrooms. They ensure that not a moment for learning is lost and that pupils' personal care needs are met with dignity and respect. The school takes exceptional care of all pupils, including those who are potentially most vulnerable, meeting all requirements and following best practice guidelines in safeguarding their well-being. Pupils have access to excellent medical and therapy support that secures their good attendance, despite their high level of medical need. Behaviour is excellent. Consistently high expectations by staff transfer to the pupils themselves. Pupils feel extremely safe, cared for and valued. That has a positive impact on their well-being and their participation in learning and supports hugely trusting relationships between pupils and staff and indeed with their families.

The outstanding headteacher, governing body and senior leadership team have very high expectations as to what can be achieved and are determined to achieve them. School self-evaluation is excellent. Everyone from senior leaders to individual teaching teams in classrooms reflects rigorously and accurately on all aspects of their work. They are focused absolutely on finding the right ways to help each pupil to learn as much as possible. The school's specialist school status has enabled it to develop its sensory provision and expertise even more and to share this with its community. It provides extremely well for those pupils who need a more-sensory approach to learning. There is also excellent support for pupils' physical needs, through the physical education and therapy programmes.

Highly effective systems have been developed for monitoring pupils' progress and achievement from entry. They are used skilfully to set very challenging targets for all pupils and to check up regularly on their progress towards these. If any pupil or group appears not to be progressing as they should be, interventions are put into place and the success of these checked on very carefully. Personalised learning

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plans, care plans and communication profiles enable each pupil to progress extremely well, because everyone knows exactly what the next steps of learning are and how to provide for these. They ensure also that parents and carers feel involved in their children's programmes, know their children's needs are being met, and that the learning and care programmes help them to provide for their children at home. Pupils progress particularly well in their communication and personal development, including their own awareness of their health needs and how to keep healthy. Excellent use of a range of communication aids supports their communication. The focus on self-help ensures pupils have as much independence and choice as possible. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent also because of the richness of the provision and high-quality assemblies, celebrations and support for these in lessons. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. It is a strongly harmonious community. Its specialist school status has enabled it to extend its partnerships within the local and regional community to much mutual benefit for learners. It has recently extended its international links, but this dimension is less developed.

Governance is excellent. The governing body is highly visible in the school, bringing much relevant experience and many talents to it. Outstanding partnerships with partner schools, colleges and businesses in the local and regional community enrich the outstanding curriculum hugely, for example, through dual placements for a few pupils and through inclusion opportunities and college courses for others. All this, together with the ways in which the school has recently strengthened the middle management roles, mean that both the capacity to sustain improvement and the value for money provided are outstanding.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Develop further its international links, so that pupils' understanding of each others' values, lifestyles and needs is enhanced

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****1**

Pupils' attainment on entry varies considerably, according to the level and complexity of their learning difficulties. However, it is usually very low. Pupils make outstanding progress from their individual starting points because of the quality of teaching and learning in lessons and the ways in which their programmes build their skills up progressively. Pupils take a broad range of qualifications, most taking entry-level GCSE qualifications, but a few taking full GCSEs or the equivalent, such as in mathematics or science. Pupils' information and communication technology, literacy and numeracy skills improve very well because of the systematic support provided. From the moment children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage and throughout the school, progress in communication and in personal development is a strength. Excellent use of communication aids and of symbol systems and signing mean that pupils have a voice in what happens to them. Those with the most complex physical

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and learning needs become increasingly sociable, putting tremendous effort into pressing a switch or shifting their eye gaze or hand to signify their choices.

In an outstanding science lesson, careful grouping of pupils and use of teaching assistants enabled all pupils to make progress in their understanding of the components of a healthy diet and of their own health needs. In a physical education lesson, individual pupils’ physical needs were catered for carefully, so that each was able to join in and succeed very well. Excellent teacher and teaching assistant feedback helped pupils to be very clear as to how well they were doing. All aspects of pupils’ personal development, including their behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are exceptional. Pupils display remarkable tolerance and good humour as they wait for others to have their turn or try out something that is particularly challenging for them. They feel exceptionally safe and quickly develop strong, trusting relationships with their key workers on entry to the school. They have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy life, including an increasing understanding of their own medical needs. They take responsibility in school. Key Stage 4 and the sixth-form, pupils revel in the opportunities they have to take responsibility, for example as part of their sports leaders’ awards or in preparing for the celebration assemblies. All that means that they are very well prepared indeed for the next steps in their education and life.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils’ behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

\*In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations for the pupils’ age

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## How effective is the provision?

Excellent relationships between staff and pupils, together with detailed understanding of each pupil’s needs and the steps they need to take next, mean that the learning in lessons is highly effective. Teachers and teaching assistants work and plan together extremely well in close teaching teams that ensure everyone has work that is motivating and relevant to their targets. Staff are expert at capitalising on pupils’ interest to do so. In the many excellent lessons observed, a particular strength was the quality of teachers’ questioning. The teachers gave pupils just enough help, but not too much, so that pupils still had to work things out for themselves. Occasionally, teachers spend too much time talking to an individual pupil, while everyone else waits, but, generally, teaching assistants are quick to keep other pupils involved.

The school's curriculum is rich, broad, balanced and innovative. It delivers a range of more traditional subject-arranged experiences, linked to examinations as well as a more integrated, themed curriculum it calls the 'pre-formal' curriculum. That is organised very carefully to make sure pupils have all the experiences they should. Pupils following that curriculum benefit from experiences that involve learning through all of their senses. Excellent use of specialist school, other grants and fundraising resources enable all pupils to have experiences inside and outside school that promote their confidence, self-esteem and life skills extremely well.

Without exception, everyone who comes into contact with the pupils encourages and supports their learning and ensures that the learning environment is extremely attractive and inviting. Excellent working with therapists and staff training ensure pupils’ therapy needs are met within classrooms and supported extremely well throughout the day. Exemplary systems are in place to ensure transitions into and out of school are optimally accomplished. The school’s outreach work, through its specialist school and other partnerships, is hugely valued and very effectively led.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	1
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The shared ambition for pupils throughout the school is visible in everything it does. Excellent attention to staff training and a culture of self-reflection at all levels have improved the previously outstanding teaching and pupil progress further. Recent

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improvements in the work of middle managers mean that it is evident in all subjects and departments. The development of the 'formal' and 'pre-formal' curriculum has ensured all learning experiences are highly relevant, accessible and yet challenging for all. Members of the governing body play their 'critical friend' role extremely well. The school is skilled at seeking out grants and at fundraising. That, alongside its excellent specialist school's work, has enhanced provision even more. Safeguarding is excellent: the school's meticulous attention to guidance ensures best practice guidance is followed rigorously and staff are ever vigilant. All pupils are valued equally and no group is disadvantaged. The personalised learning approach enables each to have access to all that the school offers and to make progress equally.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The effectiveness of the provision for the youngest children is exceptional. Outcomes across all areas of learning are outstanding because staff have such good understanding of the children's specialist needs and of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The environment is warm and inviting. The very high quality of teaching extends the learning of every child extremely well, whatever their level of need. For example, those with the most complex learning needs make outstanding progress in their sociability, self-help skills and communication. The attention to children's welfare is excellent and all requirements are met. Parents and carers are enabled to be fully involved in their children's learning. The excellent records kept of children's 'learning journeys' are enhanced considerably by parents' and carers' contributions. Children have many opportunities to use the outdoor facilities at the school. The facilities extend their learning very well. The school is, rightly, exploring ways of enhancing the nursery's own outdoor learning environment further. The leadership and management of the provision are excellent. The phase leader is very



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clear as to the strengths and areas for development.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Sixth form

Students achieve outstandingly in the sixth form because of the excellent teaching and learning and the very determined focus on developing further the skills they will need to successfully transfer to the next stage. There is an excellent emphasis on life skills and independence, as well as systematic support for students' functional skills in communication, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Students are, rightly, very proud of their excellent progress and the ways in which they contribute to school and community life, for example, through work with a local care home. The sixth-form curriculum is outstanding, benefiting from the strengths that have been established through partnerships and the specialist school work. That means that, whatever students' individual needs, a qualification at an appropriate level is in place. The accommodation has been improved considerably since the last inspection and is a welcoming, age-appropriate environment, although the leisure space is still somewhat small. The leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent. Leaders review provision very carefully. They work very well with the 14-19 curriculum coordinator, the school's sensory resource manager, and external partners to ensure each student's current provision, outcomes and their preparation for the next stage of their life are optimised.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

## Views of parents and carers

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The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are united in their praise for the school and what it does for their children. Almost all were entirely happy with the progress their children have made and many accolades about the school's work were shared with inspectors. One parent described how they never felt their child would be able to read and write, but that their child was now doing this. Others praised the teaching and the staff's openness and approachability. Several described the school simply as wonderful and stated how much they trusted the school to provide for the well being of their children. A very few wished to have even more information about their children's learning and progress.

Inspectors found that this is an outstanding school, where the quality of care provided for pupils is outstanding. Teaching is also excellent and this enables pupils to make excellent progress from their starting points. The school uses an excellent range of methods, including home school books, DVDs and newsletters to involve parents and carers in their children's learning, as well as welcoming them into school.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Clare School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 94 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	81	10	19	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	86	7	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	36	69	14	27	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	62	17	33	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	43	83	6	12	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	38	73	13	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	59	20	39	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	27	53	20	39	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	34	65	16	31	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	67	14	29	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	63	16	31	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	42	81	9	17	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	43	83	9	17	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



21 November 2011

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of The Clare School, Norwich, NR4 7AU**

We enjoyed meeting you and watching your lessons when we visited your school recently. Thank you to those of you who spoke with us. You told us you thought your school was a very good school and that you have lots of fun and felt safe. You love all the interesting things that you do. We think you are very lucky to be at a school like The Clare School. It is an excellent school and a very special place to learn. The headteacher, the staff and the governing body all work very hard to make sure that you can learn as much as possible and that you feel looked after and safe.

We think you make particularly good progress in your communication, speaking and listening and towards reaching your personal targets. It was good to see so many of you becoming more independent as you progressed through the school. That is because your teachers make lessons interesting for you and make sure they are at just the right level for each of you. Everyone checks very carefully on how well you are learning, so that you get any extra help you might need in the right sort of ways. You have lots of exciting things to do and it was good to see you doing so many healthy things, like all your sports and cooking.

We have asked the headteacher and the governing body to do one thing in particular to improve the school further. That is to help you to understand more about how people in other countries live and to help them to understand your lives too. You can help by continuing to come to school every day and trying as hard as you do in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Susan Lewis  
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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