

St Clare's School

Rough Heanor Road, Mickleover, Derby, DE3 9AZ

Inspection dates 23–24 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- St Clare's School has continued to improve further since the previous inspection and is now outstanding in all areas of its work. Through her in-depth knowledge of the school, the headteacher, supported by her impressive leadership team, continues to drive improvements forward at a rapid pace.
- The school's values are based firmly on ensuring that all pupils achieve the best that they can. Plans for improvement are written and implemented with this in mind. Members of the school community who responded to questionnaires and surveys fully support the belief the school has in itself and are proud to be associated with it.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in all areas of their work in both key stages. By the time they reach the end of Year 11, they have made impressive gains in their learning relative to their starting points and have narrowed the gap significantly between their attainment and the attainment of pupils nationally.
- The effectiveness of the governing body has improved significantly since the previous inspection. All members now play an active part in supporting the school. Governors know the school well and are clear about where it can continue to improve.
- Teaching is outstanding. The school's judgements of the quality of teaching over time are accurate.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around school is exemplary. From the time they enter the school, they make impressive improvements in their personal development due to the high quality support and guidance they receive.
- The school's outstanding curriculum is regularly reviewed to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of all pupils. Because of this, pupils are extremely well prepared when they move on to the next stage of their lives.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, including several which were joint observations with members of the school's leadership team. On the first day, inspectors observed lessons which were part of a themed creative arts day. This included a carousel of different creative activities, including photography, dance, music, printing, poetry and making cupcakes.
- On the second day, observations included a range of subjects in both key stages, covering all abilities. Pupils were also observed around the school at break and lunch times and at the beginning and end of the day.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a group of pupils. A majority of the school's staff completed the Ofsted questionnaire.
- Although no parents had responded to the on-line questionnaire, 'Parent View', inspectors took account of parents' responses to the school's own surveys, modelled on the Ofsted questions.
- Various documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary, the school improvement plan, data and minutes from meetings of the governing body were scrutinised during the inspection.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

David Muir, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Clare's is a secondary special school which provides placements for pupils with a range of special educational needs, including moderate learning difficulties. Many pupils have other, associated needs, which can include behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, communication and language difficulties, sensory impairments and physical disabilities.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There are twice as many boys as girls in the school and the proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds is slightly above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (extra government funding for specific groups of pupils) is twice the national average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Use the data already collected by the school to compare the progress made by pupils in the school to the progress made by pupils nationally.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- A high proportion of pupils make, or exceed, the highly ambitious targets set for their progress when taking into account their starting points. All groups of pupils make outstanding progress. There are no differences between the progress made by boys and girls or by pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. However, pupils in Key Stage 3 make slightly better progress than those in Key Stage 4.
- The school offers the choice of a wide range of external accreditations and qualifications. These include GCSEs, Entry Level Certificates, ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) awards and Functional Skills qualifications. All pupils who left school at the end of Year 11 last year had gained external qualifications, with 11 out of 12 having gained a GCSE in art. The school is continually reviewing the courses available to ensure that they meet the needs of all pupils in the school.
- Pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding make even better progress than those who do not. This ensures that the gap between their performance and those of other pupils, in the school and nationally, closes significantly during their time in the school.
- Pupils make outstanding improvements in their communication skills and in reading, writing and numeracy. High quality input around the use of symbols and signs, helps pupils to become far more confident communicators during their time in the school. Reading is a high priority in the school. Pupils enjoy reading in all subjects and outside of lessons and are able to use the sounds that letters make (phonics) well to read words that they do not know.
- Pupils develop a high level of independence and a secure understanding of how the world around them works. This allows them to be very well-prepared for the next stage of their lives when the time comes for them to leave St Clare's. This is reflected in the success of post-16 placements, which are well-chosen to meet the needs of pupils.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- All of the teaching seen during the inspection was at least good; most of it was outstanding. The school's leadership team has a very clear and strong understanding of what outstanding teaching and learning look like. The school's records indicate that teaching is typically outstanding.
- During the 'creative arts day' pupils were learning new skills and were enthusiastically participating in many different exciting activities. Throughout these sessions, there was still a clear focus on the development of literacy, numeracy and communication skills. This was a strong feature of other lessons observed during the inspection.
- In all lessons, there are high levels of challenge for all pupils. They are actively engaged in their learning because teachers ensure that lessons are relevant and accessible and they make the learning fun. There are high levels of trust between all staff and pupils, which means that pupils feel comfortable about making mistakes and learning from them.
- Learning support assistants play an extremely valuable and active part in supporting learning by working with individual pupils or groups, improving communication and assessing the pupils' work to help the teachers with their planning.
- Pupils' work over time shows that the outstanding teaching leads to outstanding learning in individual lessons and over longer periods of time. During lessons, staff are continually checking how much learning is going on and they use this information to plan the next steps for the pupils.
- In the best lessons, the quality of questioning is exemplary, as it focuses clearly on the expected learning and open questions are asked so that all pupils can be involved.
- Teachers provide high quality feedback in a variety of ways. It is given throughout the lessons through spoken comments. It is also provided in a written form to show pupils what they need

to improve and how they should do this. The feedback given is firmly related to targets and expected learning in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and have very positive attitudes to learning. They are able to explain clearly the positive impact that the school has had on their lives. They say that they like that school because staff know them and their needs well. They display mature attitudes to their education and have confidence that they will gain worthwhile qualifications and knowledge to support them in the next stage of their lives.
- Although some pupils have significant behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, it is rare to see lessons disrupted. However, pupils say that when there is some disruption, teachers act consistently to ensure that this causes minimum interruption to learning. Pupils say that they learn how to manage their own behaviour. They learn techniques and strategies to remove themselves from situations and to not react to provocation.
- The school has a wide range of links with the wider community which allows pupils to develop resilience and independence as they are continually expected to adapt to environments which are unfamiliar to them. These links include helping residents of a local home for elderly people, links with schools in other countries and a link with a local charity which supports the homeless.
- Staff enjoy working in the school. This shows as they go about their work in an extremely positive way, modelling positive and upbeat behaviour. This mood infects pupils who also go about with smiles on their faces and clearly enjoy being in school.
- Pupils are given responsibilities. Prefects are required to go through a formal election process, which helps them to understand how democracy works. Part of their responsibility is to help with the serving of lunch for their peers. Lunch is a very vibrant and dynamic communal event, which exemplifies the community feel that there is in the school. All pupils have the opportunity to be on the school council, which contributes pupils' views to school improvement.
- Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development shine through all aspects of the school's work. Pupils are given opportunities throughout the day to reflect on their experiences. Improvements in behaviour show that, as pupils move through school, they increasingly understand the difference between right and wrong and what types of behaviour are acceptable in different situations. Links with schools, through the Comenius Project, give pupils plenty of opportunities to link with pupils from schools in other parts of Europe.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- St Clare's presents as a very confident community, with the highest of expectations. The headteacher has a strong drive and commitment which is clear through the vision that has been developed in the school over a number of years. Staff, at all levels, fully understand what is expected in the school and this ensures that all pupils feel safe and secure. As a result, there are extremely high levels of trust among all members of the community. It ensures that all pupils are given a grounding which prepares them outstandingly well for their future.
- The school's evaluations of its performance involve parents, pupils and staff. This ensures that reasons for improvements are shared and understood by everyone. The school's assessment of its strengths is very accurate. However, leaders do not use national data as effectively as they might to make comparisons between the progress made by pupils in St Clare's and the progress made by pupils nationally. The quality of teaching is outstanding because of the support and challenge staff receive. Leaders know in fine detail the strengths of everyone's work and also know where further consolidation is needed. Staff are reflective about their work and are clear about how they can enhance their work further. The school's records show that teaching has

improved over time.

- The range of subjects taught is wide and these are backed up by themed days and an extensive range of visits and residential trips, which enhance pupils' learning very effectively. There is a strong emphasis across all lessons and aspects of the school's work on the school's core values. These are used to develop pupils' understanding of their place in the world and prepare them very well for life in multi-cultural 21st century Britain.
- The extent to which parents are involved was reflected in surveys of their views which show that all those who responded would recommend the school to other parents. All other responses were also positive, except for some disagreement about the amount of homework set by the school. The school is already reviewing this area of its work.
- The work of all staff, including the headteacher, office staff and cleaners, is subject to detailed systems to manage their performance. Where relevant, these are related to the Teachers' Standards but expectations are more challenging due to the school's modification of them to suit the context of the school. The targets which are set for staff are linked to pupils' performance and are used to decide whether staff should receive a pay rise.
- Incidents of racism or other prejudice-based bullying are rare. In conversations, pupils were clear why these behaviours are unacceptable. They understand tolerance and understanding about those who come from backgrounds different to them. This view is underpinned by the strong focus on the rights of every individual to reach their potential.
- Although the local authority has an appropriately light-touch approach to this outstanding school, support that is provided through the school improvement service is highly valued by the school's leaders. There are clear, open lines of communication so that advice can be sought on how to improve further. For example, the school has used the links with the local authority to moderate and validate its views on the quality of teaching and achievement in the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Since the previous inspection, the governing body has made the required improvements. It knows the school very well and clearly understands what the school needs to do to continue to improve. The governing body is provided with clear and detailed information about the performance of the school. Governors are skilled at asking questions which appropriately challenge the leaders and hold them to account for the performance of the school. Governors are regular visitors to the school and are well known by staff and pupils. The governing body reviews policies regularly and also plays an active part in developing the school improvement plan. This has been a significant factor in ensuring that the school continues to be outstanding. Governors know very well about the performance of staff and pupils. They understand what support is being provided to staff and how that is having an impact on their performance. They monitor the work of staff, including the headteacher, and are closely involved in making decisions about salary progression and promotion. Salary progression is based on an extremely rigorous and exacting set of criteria to ensure that only those who are performing with the highest of expectations progress. Governors have a full understanding of performance data and understand what outstanding performance looks like.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	113046
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	403787

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Giacobbe
Headteacher	Carmel McKenna
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2010
Telephone number	01332 511757
Fax number	01332 519968
Email address	head@stclares.derby.sch.uk

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