

The Clere School

Earlstone Common, Burghclere, Newbury, RG209HP

Inspection dates 10–11 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students' achievement has improved considerably. Overall, attainment is above the national average and rising throughout the school.
- The large majority of students learn well and make good progress by the end of Key Stage 4. The rate of progress made by students currently in the school is improving strongly.
- Teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. Improvements in teaching have led to higher levels of student engagement in lessons and faster progress in learning.
- Students feel safe and the school keeps students safe. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and often exemplary.
- Attendance has improved and is in line with the national average.
- Leaders and members of the Interim Executive Board check the work of the school carefully. Their successful actions have led to considerable improvements in relation to students' achievement and the quality of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough students make rapid progress in their learning. Too few currently attain the highest grades.
- The progress made by higher ability students in English and middle ability students in mathematics is slower than for other students overall.
- Too few lessons are outstanding across the full range of subject areas. A small proportion of lessons require further improvement. Occasionally, lessons do not provide sufficient challenge for students of different abilities, particularly the more able.
- Some improvement plans do not include clear and measurable targets relating to the performance of different groups.
- Leaders and members of the Interim Executive Board do not yet systematically collect and analyse the views of parents and carers.
- Consequently, leaders and members of the Interim Executive Board cannot always evaluate fully the impact of the school's work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 21 lessons and visited other lessons briefly. Fifteen observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed leaders giving feedback to teachers.
- Inspectors observed teaching across year groups and in the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, geography, religious studies, music, design and technology, French, German, drama, physical education (PE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE). All subject areas have been observed during previous monitoring inspections.
- Inspectors held meetings with school staff, members of the Interim Executive Board and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the school's own self-evaluation and improvement plans; information about students' progress and attainment; information about the monitoring of teaching quality and training; records of teacher appraisal; the work that students were doing in their books; and the school's documentation relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors talked to students in lessons and met with three representative groups of students from Years 7, 9 and 10.
- Inspectors met with a group of parents and carers and took into account 18 responses to the online parent survey (Parent View) and 79 responses to a recent survey of parental views carried out by the school. They also looked at information about the school's engagement with parents and school-home communication.
- This was the fourth monitoring visit since the school was judged to require special measures. The school had made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at its previous inspection at the previous two monitoring visits, September 2012 and January 2013.
- The interim headteacher has been in post since April 2012. She was appointed as substantive headteacher in April 2013.

Inspection team

Christopher Wood, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Robert Smith

Additional Inspector

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.

Information about this school

- In this smaller-than-average-sized secondary school most of the students on roll are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is low.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is much lower than the national average, at just over one in every 10 students.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is also similar to the national average. Their needs mainly relate to a range of moderate learning difficulties.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of students that make rapid progress in their learning, with a particular focus on higher ability students in English and middle ability students in mathematics.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching across the full range of subjects, by:
 - using information about students' prior knowledge to ensure activities fully challenge students of different abilities, especially the more able
 - ensuring that the criteria students are given to help them evaluate their work focus more clearly on what they need to do to achieve their personal targets
 - ensuring that planned opportunities for students to reflect on or consolidate their learning are meaningful and help them to better understand what they need to do to improve their work.
- Strengthen the capacity of leaders and members of the Interim Executive Board to evaluate fully the impact of the school's actions by:
 - ensuring that all improvement plans are of a consistently high quality and include clear and measurable outcomes for different groups of students
 - collecting and analysing more systematically the views of parents and carers.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- A large majority of students at The Clere now make good progress in their learning and achieve well. Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve equally well because the additional support they receive is well focused and successful.
- In 2012, the proportion of Year 11 students achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics increased by 11% and was above the national average. Overall, these students had made progress at a rate that was just above other students nationally. Nevertheless, the rate of progress made by higher ability students in English and middle ability students in mathematics was slower. Too few students achieved the highest GCSE grades, notably in English. By contrast, students made much faster progress in science.
- The proportion of current students making rapid progress in their learning is improving. Challenging targets are now in place to ensure that more students make quicker progress and achieve higher GCSE grades across a range of subjects.
- Students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding also achieve well. In 2012, their achievement at GCSE was above the national average for similar pupils across a range of subjects. These students had made strong progress in English but slower progress in mathematics. The achievement of current students eligible for the pupil premium is improving further as a result of well-targeted support and better quality teaching. Specific support is now in place to ensure that these students make faster progress in mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has been transformed since the previous inspection as a result of coherent and high quality training and development for teachers. Teaching is now consistently good across a wide range of subject areas. A small proportion of teaching still requires further improvement but this is diminishing rapidly. Although the proportion of outstanding lessons has increased overall, this is not yet consistent across the full range of subject areas.
- Students enjoy their learning because teachers plan activities that are relevant and well sequenced, and focus strongly on the skills and understanding students needed to make good progress. Typically, lessons encourage high levels of collaboration and discussion. Students say that teachers are willing to experiment and try new approaches. Consequently, most lessons feel fresh and up to date.
- Teachers generally make good use of the accurate information that they have about students' prior attainment to plan lessons that are well matched to the needs of students. Occasionally, this information is not used well enough to ensure that activities are challenging for students of all abilities, especially the more able.
- Teachers routinely use good range of questions to extend students' responses, challenge their thinking and deepen their understanding. Problem solving activities and investigations are commonly used approaches; these enable students to develop strong communication and team working skills.
- In the very best lessons, students make rapid progress because activities are challenging and build successfully on the students' prior learning. For example, in an outstanding German lesson, students made rapid progress during a job interview simulation when using their existing language skills flexibly in a 'real-life situation'. In an outstanding drama lesson, students demonstrated an impressive understanding of Antonin Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty'. They applied his theories successfully to create, evaluate and improve devised pieces of a high quality.
- Overall, students get consistently good feedback on their learning in lessons. Marking has improved and is mostly of a good quality. Students have regular opportunities to evaluate whether they have met their personal targets. However, sometimes the criteria they are given against which to evaluate their work are too general. In some lessons, the opportunities that

teachers plan for students to reflect on or consolidate their learning are rushed. Consequently students do not understand fully what they need to do to improve their work.

- There is specific support in place to help those students who find reading difficult to successfully improve their skills. The school promotes the importance of wider reading actively in lessons and beyond. The recent refurbishment of the school library and purchase of up-to-date reading material have had a positive impact on students' attitudes to reading.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and sometimes exemplary; they are polite, courteous and welcoming. Students are proud of the school. They have played their full part in this improvement. Students trust staff to help them to sort out any problems when they arise. Most parents and carers agree and told inspectors that when they had had particular issues, the school had been quick to respond.
- Students feel safe and enjoy school; staff care about them and senior leaders are an approachable and visible presence around the school. Incidents of bullying, including racism or homophobia, are very rare. Students are given good information and guidance from the school. A recent focus on the dangers of cyber-bullying was reinforced through assemblies, personal, social and health education lessons and an information evening for parents and carers.
- Students told inspectors that they get on well together and there is now much greater mixing between students in different year groups. Older students often act as positive role models for younger children in the school, contributing to the 'supportive', 'friendly' and 'close' community. High quality relationships between students and school staff are now the norm. In a small number of lessons, where the purpose or pace of learning is unclear or too slow, students sometimes go off task or act immaturity.
- The school's tracking of behaviour and the additional support for the small number of students who find it difficult to behave consistently well is of a high quality. Consequently, incidents of poor behaviour have fallen dramatically and are now rare. Students' attendance has improved. The proportion of students who find it hard to attend school regularly has fallen. Both are in line with the national average. There are no discernible differences in the attendance of different groups of students. This is evidence of the school's successful promotion of equalities.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is inspirational. She is well supported by a cohesive senior team. Middle leaders understand clearly their role in raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching. Staff are dedicated and enthusiastic. Together, they have transformed the school since the previous inspection. The local authority has also helped the school to improve the capacity of leaders and the quality of teaching.
- Leaders observe teachers at work frequently and evaluate their performance accurately. Their developmental feedback, a coherent programme of training and a willingness amongst staff to share good practice have led to consistently good and sometimes outstanding practice in the classroom. Arrangements for assessing the overall quality of a teacher's performance are now rigorous and salary progression is closely linked to students' good or rapid progress.
- Systems for gathering and using information about students' achievement are now rigorous. Leaders use this information successfully to identify gaps in students' learning and to put in place additional support to help them catch up. Improvement plans are generally of a high quality. However, some do not include clear or measurable targets that relate to the performance of different groups of students. Consequently, school leaders cannot always evaluate fully the impact of all their actions.
- Support for the relatively small number of students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up and pupil

premium is based on an excellent knowledge of their needs and thoughtful consideration of which activities will have the greatest impact. These students make good progress overall and any gaps in achievement are closing steadily. Information about the school's use of the pupil premium funding is very clearly published on the school's website. The school is actively looking to strengthen this area of its work further; one middle leader, for example, is investigating ways to improve the performance of these students as part of a national leadership qualification.

- Students take a good balance of academic and practical subjects that prepare them well for their future education and careers. These subjects and other opportunities outside lessons contribute to students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Recent opportunities include the school musical 'Annie', a French exchange trip to Strasbourg, a musical performance by Ghanaian drummers and participation in a range of sporting competitions.
 - Systems for keeping children safe are robust and comply with statutory requirements. The school works very well with other agencies to keep students safe. The good progress made by different groups of students is evidence of the school's successful promotion of equalities. Most students, irrespective of background, make good progress, although higher ability students in English and middle ability students in mathematics make slower progress than their peers.
 - Leaders have improved the quality and range of school-home communication and opportunities for parents and carers to find out more about how to help their children. Parents and carers say these systems are now good. Nevertheless, they would like even better information about how to help their children manage workload and prepare for formal assessments. Leaders listen to parents' immediate concerns and act on them quickly. However, they do not yet systematically collect and analyse the views of parents and carers to evaluate fully the impact of their actions.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of the Interim Executive board is highly effective. Members of the Interim Executive Board visit the school regularly and are able to rigorously check the quality of the school's work.
 - They analyse the progress made by different groups of students closely, including those that are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding and disabled students and those that have special educational needs. They are able to use performance information to evaluate how well the school is doing, compared with other schools nationally. They are however, not yet sufficiently involved in evaluating the views of parents and carers.
 - They have been closely involved in the appointment of new staff and have worked with leaders to ensure that decisions about teachers' pay are closely linked to their performance and the impact on outcomes for students. They have an accurate view of the quality of teaching.
 - They have received relevant training to develop their capacity further. They are working well with the school to ensure that the process of moving to a full governing body is implemented successfully.
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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	116430
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	420433

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	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	571
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Melanie Saunders
Headteacher	Felicity Martin
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 December 2011
Telephone number	01635 278272
Fax number	01635 278538
Email address	adminoffice@clere.hants.sch.uk

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