

St Clere's School

Butts Lane, Stanford-le-Hope, SS17 0NW

Inspection dates

17–18 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well. They reach above-average standards by the end of Year 11. This represents good progress in relation to their starting points which are average and sometimes below average. The development of students' literacy and numeracy skills is particularly good.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special education needs is good, while students who are hearing or visually impaired make outstanding progress.
- Teaching is good. There are very positive classroom relationships and students respond well to the challenge provided by their teachers.
- The progress of disadvantaged students is good and gaps between their attainment and that of other students are closing.
- Students behave well. They are very proud of their school, and display good attitudes towards their work and to each other. They feel very safe and their attendance is well above average.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because the academy promotes it very well. As a result, their understanding of British values, including the rule of law, parliamentary democracy and the dangers of extremism, equip them to be valued citizens.
- Leaders and governors have a very accurate view of the academy's strengths and remaining areas for improvement. Thoughtful leadership has improved the quality of education provided, particularly the quality of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking and teachers' comments in books and on work do not support some students to develop the higher level writing skills needed in order to further raise their attainment.
- Not all teachers make good use of the information they have about what students already know and can do to set work that is matched to students' abilities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 38 lessons and ten part-lessons across the school and within the specialist resource provision for students with hearing and visual impairment. Eight lesson visits were joint observations carried out with senior leaders.
- Inspectors visited the academy's Contemplation Space, where students undertake personal reflection time, and also visited an assembly.
- Meetings were held with students from different year groups and representatives from student bodies including prefects, council members and the Co-op Youth Council. Inspectors also met with senior leaders, subject leaders, members of the governing body and the chief executive of the academy trust.
- Inspectors studied a number of documents including: the academy's self-evaluation form; improvement plans; department reviews; evaluations of teaching; policies; and assessment information. They also looked at information about students' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors scrutinised students' work.
- The specialist unit for hearing and visually impaired students was visited as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors took account of 107 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the comments of 25 parents. They also received correspondence from parents.
- Responses to questionnaires completed by 78 staff were also studied.
- This inspection was an aligned inspection undertaken at the same time as that of Gable Hall, which incorporates the sixth form where a number of St Clare's students go on to join at the start of Year 12.

Inspection team

David Turner, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Susan Cox	Additional Inspector
Kevin Dyke	Additional Inspector
Sarah Roscoe	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Clare's School is an average-sized secondary school.
- The school converted to become an academy on 1 September 2011. When its predecessor school, St Clare's School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The academy is part of the St Clare's Co-operative Academy Trust which includes St Clare's School, Thameside Primary School, East Tilbury Primary School and Stanford-le-Hope Primary School.
- The academy has specialist status for science and sport education.
- The great majority of students are of White British heritage and the proportion of those from a minority ethnic background is well below the national average. The number of students who speak English as an additional language is also well below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs receiving support through the new education, health and care plan is average. The proportion of students supported through a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The academy manages a specially resourced hearing and visual impairment provision for pupils with special educational needs. There are 14 students from the academy, who attend on a full-time basis. Staff who work at this unit also provide services across the local borough to children and young people.
- A very few students are taught in alternative provision away from the academy via Right Directions which is part of Inspiration Youth Call, Thurrock. Ten students are in part-time work placements at Thameside Primary School, East Tilbury School, Stanford-le-Hope Primary School, Horndon Timber Produce, Bloomin' Babies Nursery and Laurens D'Auray Hair and Beauty.
- The academy 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?

- Ensure that all teachers raise student' achievement further by:
 - consistently checking that all students understand and act upon the written advice they are given which is intended to help them improve their writing skills
 - organising work and activities so that these are more closely matched to students' abilities.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- In the period since it opened, the academy's leaders have established a good quality of education which prepares students well for living and working in modern Britain. The headteacher is supported by an effective leadership team and leads with integrity and purpose. Staff are exceptionally positive about the academy and its leaders. They enjoy working at the academy and feel well supported to grow into their roles and progress their careers. This is indicative of the cooperative community the academy has become.
- Leaders' evaluation of academy performance and the quality of teaching is accurate. They carefully link their observations of teaching to the achievement of students and draw on a wide range of evidence to do this. They use this information to identify the professional development needs of all staff and set achievable improvement targets. Teachers are professional and constructive in their response to feedback and act upon it quickly.
- Improvement planning is effective because leaders have focused carefully on raising the quality of teaching and students' achievement in all subjects, especially for the most able and those eligible for the pupil premium. Leaders set out how certain improvements should take place by particular points in time.
- Subject leaders have been helped to develop their roles and the academy has successfully promoted several to senior positions. They readily accept accountability for their performance and are closely involved with senior leaders in all stages of improvement work, including the evaluation of teaching across their subjects. Their improvements to the quality of teaching are clearly evident.
- Arrangements for managing the performance of teachers are well established and effective. Targets refer to *Teachers' Standards* and students' achievement. Pay increases are closely linked to students' learning and progress. While teachers are well supported, the academy takes firm action to deal with any inadequate teaching.
- Pupil premium funding is used appropriately to support eligible students. They receive additional tutoring with reading, writing and mathematics skills, attend Saturday schools, and their learning is carefully checked in lessons. 'Catch up' funding is used to provide support for those students who are behind when they join Year 7, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- The leadership of the specialist provision for hearing and visually impaired students is highly effective. Leaders have ensured that these students receive expert assessment, care and teaching from well-qualified staff who work as a highly professional team in order to support them to make outstanding progress from their different starting points.
- The curriculum offers breadth and balance and has been improved to cater for students' different abilities and in response to national changes. Leaders ensure that students are provided with a range of courses and study routes, including GCSEs, vocational studies, alternative provision and work experience. Students are supported to develop their reading, writing, communication and mathematics skills. Leaders have correctly identified that students' writing skills need further improvement. The vast majority of students go on from the academy to college or leave to take jobs or places on training courses.
- Leaders do not work in isolation. They draw on the support of the chief executive of the academy trust and private advisers in order to ensure that their improvement work is successful. The academy also works closely with the trust's primary schools and this ensures a smooth change from primary to secondary school for students at the start of Year 7.
- The academy's sports specialism has ensured a high level of participation in physical games and field sports for most students, many of whom represent the academy across the local borough or at a higher level. Partnerships with other schools have ensured important funding for high-quality facilities across the

trust to which the academy belongs.

- The academy is making good preparations to ensure students are assessed properly when National Curriculum levels are removed. Leaders responsible for this work have a clear understanding of the task and are conducting careful trials of different assessment approaches based on respected national and international research. They also work closely with other schools across England to share expertise and planning.
- Leaders and teachers have developed very positive working relationships with parents, who are overwhelmingly supportive of the academy. The vast majority would recommend the school to others.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and their development of civic skills and involvement in community life is a significant strength. This is because leaders and teachers place great importance on preparing students for work, citizenship and service. Many volunteer to become prefects, sport leaders, mentors, school council members or Co-operative youth leaders. Elections and representation are an important feature of school life. As a result, students appreciate the value of British parliamentary democracy, the importance of being represented responsibly and respect for the law. They can also explain the importance of personal freedom and the risks posed by different forms of political extremism.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is effective, committed and experienced. Governors carry out their duties successfully and are well informed about the strengths of the academy. They offer valuable leadership skills from the education sector and other industries. Governors visit regularly and are closely attached to the key functions of the academy's work, including teaching, achievement and finance. They are experienced in the use of performance data and are professionally knowledgeable about child protection and safeguarding. They hold leaders firmly to account through clear performance targets and by posing challenging questions, as well as through offering support. They understand how the academy has spent pupil premium funding and its impact. Equally, they are well informed as to the effectiveness of teachers' performance management arrangements and insist that pay rises are dependent on students making good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good, both in lessons and around the school. They respect each other and their teachers. This is because of the high value the academy places on very positive relationships between all students and staff and on their personal development. As a result, students have a strong sense of responsibility to their school community.
- Students' attitudes towards learning are positive. They show high levels of commitment, interest and good effort when working. They are cooperative, contribute actively to discussions or group work and show good levels of concentration when individual work is required. Examples of low-level disruption to learning are very rare.
- Conduct around the school is good. Students are extremely welcoming to visitors. They move quickly and sensibly between lessons, using the academy's 'one way' system. They enjoy their lunch and break times and behave sensibly in the several dining areas of the academy.
- Leaders and teachers apply the academy's positive behaviour policy with consistency. They work closely and sensitively with all students and families to ensure that every member of the school community understands the values and expectations of the academy. As a result, since the academy opened, there has been a firm reduction in school detentions, exclusions and incidents which require senior staff to be called upon to deal with behaviour that is not good.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. All visitors are subject to suitable checks,

and staff are aware of how to raise any concerns. Students feel very safe and report their total confidence that they will be helped if approaching staff in times of difficulty. One student reported, 'My teachers are the most caring and inspirational people in my life.'

- Students have good awareness of risk and how to stay safe when using the internet and social media. They have a very clear understanding of different types of bullying, including verbal, physical and cyber-bullying. Students report they get on well with one another and that bullying is very rare. They especially value the active effort of the academy to resolve relationship difficulties. The number of recorded serious incidents including bullying and racism is very low. Parents agree that this is a very safe school, where staff have taken considerable time and effort to help their children.
- Students' attendance is high and punctuality for school and between lessons is exemplary. This is because of the highly supportive way in which the academy works with students and their families to promote regular attendance.
- Students are committed to service and understanding between people beyond their community and country. This is demonstrated by their international links and exchange visits with schools in the People's Republic of China and their significant work to equip a Nigerian school with resources.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has secured students' good achievement in the period since the academy opened and for those students who currently attend.
- Teachers know their students well and they build positive relationships with them, based on high levels of expectation, encouragement and respect. As a result, students are cooperative and respond well to harder work and periods when they need to sustain high levels of concentration.
- Teachers know their subjects well and the knowledge and skills required for good and better achievement. They use this knowledge to organise their teaching so it supports students to learn well. Work set by teachers is challenging and interesting. It encourages students to apply their knowledge in different ways. One example was in a Year 7 biology lesson, where students were required to use their knowledge of cells to design 'job adverts' which would match different types of cells.
- The use of questioning and discussion often supports students to think at a higher level. An example of this was seen in a Year 8 English lesson where students listened to oral history records from young Black Americans who had moved around the country with their parents following the abolition of slavery and who found the experience challenging. Questioning supported students to correctly place the stories in the time period they were from, while other students took this further and compared the migration stories with the movement of White British children during the evacuations of the Second World War.
- Teachers question students skilfully when checking on their understanding as they work. They adapt their questioning according to the abilities of different students. This ensures that students are challenged and teachers can adapt their teaching and activities if required.
- Good teaching is supporting the needs of the most-able students. In a Year 11 physics lesson, students with higher level mathematics skills were supported to use their understanding of formulae to solve an equation about electrical resistance for the first time, but they then took this much further and suggested how resistance could be beneficial in the manufacture of many devices.
- Lesson planning supports students who struggle or face disadvantage because teachers and classroom assistants carefully monitor these students' work and progress in lessons.
- Teaching helps disabled students and those who have special educational needs to make good progress. When teaching assistants are deployed to support these students, they are well organised and work closely with teachers.

- The quality of teaching in the hearing and visually impaired specialist provision is outstanding. Highly qualified staff make expert use of assessment and resources to ensure that students benefit from teaching which helps them to achieve their full potential. They also share this expertise with their non-specialist colleagues, which ensures exceptional achievement for these students when they attend lessons across the academy.
- Work is marked regularly. Teachers' comments advise students on how to improve. However, assessment of written work is not yet supporting enough students to write at the highest level of which they are capable. Teachers often repeat the same advice but students do not respond to it.
- Where teaching does not support good achievement over time, it is because teachers do not make full use of the information they have about what students already know and can do in order to plan and organise activities that are pitched at the most appropriate level.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the academy with knowledge and skills which are broadly average for their age, with the exception of those who took GCSE examinations in 2013 who were firmly below average
- There have been three sets of published results for St Clere's School since it opened as an academy and, because it is a new school, students who took examinations completed only part of their education here. Key standards reached by students are generally above average, and this represents good progress in relation to students' starting points. The proportion of students achieving five A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics is above average. Results for 2014 indicate that the proportion has increased across most subjects, including foreign languages, where standards have particularly improved.
- The proportion of students achieving the highest GCSE grades has risen. It is now average in English and above average in mathematics. The proportion of high grades is above national figures in physical education and sciences, which are the academy's specialisms.
- Students' progress and quality of learning in English is good because of a clear focus on developing their literacy knowledge and skills of reading, writing and speaking. Across different subjects, students show they are skilled at inferring the meaning of poems, narratives, historical sources, textbook information and speeches.
- Students use dictionaries with accuracy and confidence, and they show a range of other techniques for understanding the context in which key words are used. Most students read well because of the opportunities provided in school and the purposeful use of reading in lessons.
- The development of writing skills is generally good across most subjects and year groups. When writing, students describe and explain things well. However, not enough are moving on to the higher levels of writing they are capable of in a range of subjects, in order to raise standards further. They do not know how to set out arguments and write convincingly in order to achieve their very best.
- Students' progress in mathematics is consistently good. They acquire key knowledge and apply it skilfully and quickly across a range of subjects. Their calculations are accurate and, when asked, they can explain the way in which they have used a rule or concept to tackle a problem.
- In 2012 and 2013, the academy entered large numbers of students early for GCSE mathematics. Evidence seen by inspectors indicates early entry helped the most-able students in 2012 but not in 2013. Early entry no longer takes place at the academy in any GCSE subject, and achievement has risen.
- Achievement in the academy's specialisms of sciences and physical education is consistently good and in some cases exceptional. Students' scientific knowledge and understanding of key concepts, processes and skills is taught well, resulting in good progress. Achievement in physical education is good, both for those

who take examinations and those who do not. GCSE results in this subject are consistently high and the many sporting activities keep students healthy and fit.

- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress in relation to their many different starting points. Many have a range of complex needs and they learn well because assessment of their abilities and needs is accurate and provision in lessons is of high quality.
- The achievement of students educated within the hearing and visual impairment specialist provision is outstanding. They make rapid progress in their reading and communication skills and the academy also places them in mainstream classes which are matched to their range of abilities.
- The achievement of the most-able students is good. The proportion reaching the higher GCSE grades has increased and the quality of their learning is good because of the attention paid by teachers to their progress and setting more demanding work.
- The progress of students who receive additional help as part of the Year 7 'catch-up' programme is also good and shows improvements in key reading scores and numeracy skills over time.
- Students who are educated off-site or in work experience achieve well as a result of this provision. Their attendance and learning are carefully checked. Their examination results represent good progress in relation to their starting points.
- The achievement of students eligible for the pupil premium is good. They are supported to attend school regularly and receive additional help with literacy, numeracy and examination preparation. In 2013, in English, the gap between these students and other students nationally was the equivalent of just over half a GCSE grade and the gap in school was similar. In mathematics, the gap was the equivalent of one-and-a-half grades compared to other pupils nationally and similar within school. GCSE results for 2014 show these gaps have been significantly reduced.

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	137456
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	448182

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1031
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ray Osbourne
Headteacher	Ashlie Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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