

Clarence High School

West Lane, Freshfield, Formby, Liverpool, Merseyside L37 7AZ

Inspection dates

20–22 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is an improving school. The principal and senior leaders are determined to ensure that pupils enjoy their time at Clarence High School and make good progress.
- All staff care deeply about pupils and form strong bonds with them. Staff are highly attuned to the specific educational, social and emotional needs of each pupil.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and ensure that pupils know the importance of acquiring good reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Evaluations of the quality of teaching are sometimes overly generous. Advice to teachers on how they can improve lacks precision.
- Pupils benefit from an imaginative and exciting curriculum that stimulates their interests and secures their engagement in learning.
- The school is yet to implement a comprehensive system for assessing pupils' work and tracking their progress.
- Safeguarding procedures are highly rigorous and adhered to by all staff.
- Pupils make good and accelerated progress in various subjects, including English, mathematics, science and art. All go into education and training when they leave school.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. The attendance of almost all has improved since joining Clarence High. However, pupils are not as resilient as they should be, some lack the confidence to share their ideas and work independently.
- Trustees, governors and senior leaders ensure that the independent school standards are met. Most know the school's priorities and increasingly challenge senior leaders.
- Excellent therapies, and the sensory room, provide pupils with great insight into their behaviour and how to manage it.
- The school's self-evaluation is not as rigorous as it should be. Aspects do not clearly identify strengths or how the school can improve.
- All aspects of the post-16 nurture provision and key stage 2 provision are good.
- Parents are very positive about the school and say their children are safe and progressing well.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - further developing, and consistently applying, systems to assess pupils' work and track their progress
 - ensuring that senior leaders' self-evaluation of the school accurately reflects its strengths and weakness
 - making sure that observations of teaching are rigorous and clearly indicate to teachers how they can improve their practice.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - developing pupils' confidence and resilience to share their ideas and work independently.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal is very ambitious for the school and is determined that pupils at Clarence High enjoy learning and realise their potential. Together with teachers, teaching assistants, therapists and care workers, the principal ensures that pupils are safe and their personal, social and emotional needs are well catered for.
- The statement that 'Clarence stands for improving the chances of young people who need extra support to achieve great things' aptly describes the school's approach to teaching, and supporting, pupils and learners in the post-16 provision.
- Together with governors and trustees, the senior leadership team work effectively to ensure that all independent school standards are met.
- Pupils benefit from a tailored curriculum that caters for their specific interests, fires their imagination and ensures their good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils enjoy, and achieve well in, activities such as horse riding, boxing, photography, dance, drama, dog grooming and hospitality.
- Most teachers who completed the inspection survey were highly complimentary about all aspects of the school. Typical responses were, 'I feel fully supported in my work', 'I fully enjoy coming to work, even though pupils can be very challenging' and 'Our provision is unique and helps the most vulnerable pupils achieve'. Staff are appreciative of their many professional development opportunities, which they say help them in their teaching, mentoring, care and support work.
- Effective performance management procedures are in place which hold staff, including teachers, to account for pupils' academic performance and their personal, social and emotional developmental. Staff are well supported, through various training programmes, to help them meet their targets, which are reviewed twice-annually.
- Senior leaders' work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils learn about the major world faiths and about the culturally diverse nature of British society. They regularly collect money for charities and engage in events such as, 'wear it pink', 'jeans for genes' and 'learners' day'. Recently, pupils raised funds through hosting a superhero day and an event called 'Dignitea', which the lord mayors of both Liverpool and Sefton attended.
- Pupils have a good understanding of British values and enjoy putting democratic principles into practice in school, for example through their involvement with the Liverpool schools' parliament. This was recently demonstrated in a manifesto, given in a speech, for the position of young lord mayor of Liverpool.
- The principal is keen to continually improve provision, as demonstrated by the school's 'outward-facing' approach to working with partners. Recently the school enlisted the support of an improvement partner from a local authority, who is currently helping senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- All pupils are disadvantaged and benefit from additional funding. All also have education, health and care plans. Inspection evidence indicates that funding is used effectively to ensure pupils' good, sometimes outstanding, progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Additional funding also enhances pupils' learning experience and meets

their personal development and welfare needs.

- The majority of parents and carers, and representatives from placing authorities, are very positive about all aspects of the school, including pupils' safety, care and achievement. This is evident from parents who spoke with the inspector, sent texts during the inspection, and completed a recent school survey.
- The school's website was amended during the inspection and now meets statutory requirements for the publication of information on its website. The website contains a comprehensive, up-to-date safeguarding policy.
- After a material change inspection on 24 February 2016, the Department for Education granted the school permission to change the age range of pupils from 10 to 18 years to seven to 18 years. Inspection evidence indicates that younger pupils at the school make the same good progress as their older peers.
- Assessment procedures, and systems for tracking pupils' performance, are ad hoc. Procedures are in place for assessing pupils' competencies soon after they enter the school, in areas such as spelling, problem-solving, reading and comprehension. However, senior leaders and teachers do not fully utilise this information. Nor have they developed a comprehensive ongoing system to chart pupils' progress to more effectively take action to ensure that pupils are making the best possible progress.
- The school has various strategic and up-to-date plans in place, including a recent self-evaluation. However, this self-evaluation is not precise about what the school needs to do to further improve. Similarly, records of monitoring the quality of teaching are overly generous, indicating that most teaching is outstanding and giving scant advice to teachers on how they can improve their practice. This limits the pace of improvement to the quality of teaching.

Governance

- At the time of the inspection, the position of chair of governors was vacant. In addition, the school was being reorganised and new arrangements for reporting to Nugent were being implemented.
- The principal reports to Nugent's executive management team quarterly and is held accountable for all aspects of the school's performance, including outcomes for pupils, attendance, pupil numbers and financial matters.
- Governors and trustees know that all pupils are disadvantaged and have special educational needs. They are aware of how additional funding is spent and of its positive impact on raising standards.
- The principal has made self-evaluation, whole-school tracking of pupils' progress and monitoring the quality of teaching priority areas for development. Such developments will enhance governors' and trustees' understanding of school priorities, enabling them to challenge senior leaders better and hold them more closely to account.

Safeguarding

- The school leaves absolutely nothing to chance when it comes to safeguarding pupils, many of whom are vulnerable, and promoting their welfare. Senior leaders ensure that suitable policies are in place that consider the latest government guidelines on keeping

children safe in education. Staff have an in-depth understanding of the potential dangers that individual pupils face. This is because they are familiar with the detailed risk assessments drawn up for each pupil.

- Comprehensive procedures are in place to ensure that all staff are suitably qualified to work with children, trained well to understand all forms of abuse and able to spot pupils in need of help and support.
- Staff know who the designated safeguarding leaders are and exactly what to do should they have a concern about the safety of a pupil. The school's work with specialist partners, including from social, health, medical and police services, and in-house specialists from within Nugent, is well established and highly effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good and has been sustained since the previous inspection. Pupils learn in bright, stimulating classrooms, where their work is valued and celebrated.
- Teachers work exceptionally well with teaching assistants and care workers to support pupils and ensure their good progress. Most pupils work in small groups, several benefit from one-to-one support from various members of staff.
- Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils and have great expectations of them. Typically, lessons aim to meet pupils' specific education needs, setting out clear objectives and including checks to establish pupils' level of understanding.
- Most teachers consistently apply the school's feedback policy, indicating to pupils how well they are performing and offering advice on how pupils can take the next steps in their learning. Pupils' often weak writing skills and, at times, their reluctance to write sometimes limit their responses to teachers' comments. However, pupils read such comments and are happy to engage in dialogue with their teachers to improve their work.
- Mathematics teaching is good. In this subject, teachers are keen to develop pupils' appreciation of the importance of good calculation skills in everyday life. Pupils' books show many examples of applied mathematics, exemplified in activities where pupils are required to plan events, such as parties, shop online and compare different supermarket prices.
- Work to encourage pupils to think hard and share their views in subjects such as English is developing well. This was shown in an activity requiring pupils to explain the difference between the content and layout of broadsheet and tabloid newspapers. Pupils demonstrated their excellent debating skills, ability to formulate their own ideas and good use of evidence to support a point of view.
- Pupils regularly engage in practical activities and experimentation in science. This was illustrated well in a lesson where pupils were invited to examine a sheep's heart, lungs and trachea and inflate the lungs. Although no pupil volunteered, they gained a deep insight into the operation of the respiratory system after the teacher blew down a tube to inflate the sheep's lungs.
- The reading skills of some pupils are well developed. With support, pupils have read poetry to various audiences, during open days and celebrations, and prepared, and delivered, speeches in auspicious venues such as the Liverpool Town Hall.
- Teachers are aware that for some pupils, progress is measured in small but progressive

steps. This is shown in hospitality and food technology lessons where pupils, previously reluctant to communicate, now bake and cook, talk about preparation and ingredients and explain cooking methods for different dishes.

- Teachers can point to successes, such as examples of pupils who had been previously disengaged 'opening up' in class and debating ideas. However, at times, the intensive additional support that pupils receive prevents them from sharing their ideas effectively. Occasionally, it inhibits the development of pupils' independent learning skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. In Clarence High, pupils are nurtured and well looked after by caring staff.
- Pupils have access to different therapies, including hand, foot and shoulder massage, and equine therapy. The school has compelling evidence that such therapies support pupils well in managing their own feelings and expressing themselves. Pupils self-refer to the school's various therapy sessions and can take 'time out' in the sensory room when learning and relationships become too difficult to manage.
- Pupils enjoy their daily motivational assemblies, which help to create a sense of unity and common purpose in the school. This was evident in a morning assembly, focusing on seizing the moment, where pupils had to guess how much time people spend sleeping, eating and queuing during a lifetime. The close-knit character of the school was further consolidated at the end-of-day assembly, where pupils reflected on their learning and were praised for their hard work and perseverance.
- Pupils know about safe and unsafe situations, which they learn of through the personal, social, health and emotional aspects of the curriculum, assemblies and visitors. Pupils' understanding of how to stay safe while online is good. Their access to the internet is strictly available for school work only, mobile phones are not allowed.
- A good range of sports is on offer for pupils. The school has good facilities on site, including a gym, basketball court, football pitches and a health and fitness suite. Activities such as boxing are taught on a one-to-one coaching basis.
- Pupils' understanding of the harmful effects of smoking, drinking and using illegal drugs is good. They are aware of the contribution that healthy eating makes to their overall well-being.
- Pupils' resilience, and ability to try out new things and learn from mistakes, is developing. The school's focus on helping pupils grow in confidence and develop a positive image of themselves is paying off, as pupils increasingly engage in public speaking, dance and drama.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Some pupils find it very difficult to manage their emotions. The complex lives that most pupils live can dramatically impact their behaviour at any time. However, pupils

continually learn how to conduct themselves appropriately when in school, on placements in college and when on educational trips and visits.

- Staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy and are expert at spotting 'triggers' and preventing pupils from losing control. At the time of the inspection, the school was calm and purposeful, no poor behaviour was observed. Pupils' behaviour in class is good. Those who find long periods of concentration difficult can apply various coping strategies, including taking time out of lessons for short periods.
- Pupils' attendance is closely monitored and continually improving. Staff are prepared to do whatever it takes, including making home visits, to improve attendance. Most pupils who attend Clarence High have previously attended school infrequently and spent extended periods of time out of school. Records shows that over time, the attendance of almost all pupils improves significantly.
- The school's behaviour logs show that pupils who infringe the school rules are sanctioned appropriately. Staff only use physical restraint on rare occasions, including when pupils and/or staff may be in danger. Similarly, the school administers fixed-term exclusions as a last resort.
- The school's own pupil and parent surveys, and the Ofsted inspection questionnaire for staff, all indicate that behaviour is good. Inspection evidence concurs with this indication.
- On the rare occasions when sexist, racist or homophobic language is used, appropriate sanctions are administered. Such incidents are always recorded.
- Pupils are proud to attend Clarence High. They are taught to be respectful to each other and staff and to ensure that the school, and generous outdoor areas, are kept clean and well looked after.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- During their time at Clarence High, pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects. Baseline assessment tests carried out on entry to the school indicate that the skills and abilities of almost all pupils, including in reading, writing and mathematics, are well below those typically expected for their age.
- Pupils, and learners in the nurture group, are offered a wide range of qualifications, short courses and vocational training opportunities. Opportunities are tailored to pupils' interests and academic abilities. They support them well in acquiring the social and interpersonal communication skills needed to be successful in further education, training and employment.
- At the end of Year 11 in 2016, pupils studied for a range of GCSE qualifications in subjects, including English, mathematics, science and art. A small group of pupils attained GCSEs at grades A* to C, and all pupils who sat examinations were graded. Though some pupils did not attain GCSEs at grades A* to C, all made good progress from their low starting points on entry to the school.
- The quality of work in current Year 11 pupils' folders, and the quality of their exhibited artwork, indicates that pupils are making good progress in their GCSE work. Given the small size of this cohort, and the 2015 cohort, it is not possible to draw comparisons between their performance and that of other pupils nationally.

- All pupils are disadvantaged and eligible for additional funding. Inspection evidence indicates that funding is used effectively. For example, it enables the school to provide one-to-one tuition in a wide range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, basic skills and life skills. Similarly, all pupils have education, health and care plans. Such plans identify pupils' specific learning needs. Evidence indicates that work with specialist partners, speech and language therapists and services such as CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health services) helps to ensure the good progress of such pupils.
- Often from exceptionally low starting points, pupils make good progress in reading. Teachers, teaching assistants and support workers regularly promote reading and provide many opportunities for pupils to read. This includes in class and at school celebration events.
- Pupils are successful in attaining entry-level qualifications in subjects such as physical education, citizenship, personal, social and health education, mathematics, English and food technology. Recently, pupils attained young equestrian awards and commendations for modern and contemporary dance.
- Few pupils are high attainers. However, pupils' tailored curriculum and one-to-one support enable teachers to challenge all pupils, including the most able, to achieve well. Evidence of the good achievement of the most able is in pupils' excellent artwork, well-developed debating skills, homework and in English, mathematics and science coursework folders.

Sixth form provision

Good

- The nurture leader, key workers and support staff have exceptionally good relationships with learners in the post-16 nurture group. They understand how those with special educational needs acquire skills and knowledge, and ensure that appropriate qualifications and work experience opportunities are available.
- Provision is available for learners from Years 12 to 14, all of whom have specific learning difficulties. All aspects of the leadership and management of the post-16 provision are good. The nurture group leader is trained well and is a qualified special educational needs coordinator. At the time of the inspection, very few learners were taking advantage of post-16 provision.
- The nurture group leader works closely in partnership with key members of staff in school, including teachers and therapists, and external specialist partners. Good links with colleges and training providers have been very beneficial to learners, who have been successful in gaining work experience and qualifications in areas such as equine studies and dog grooming.
- Learners have visited hotels and 'eating houses' to gain an insight into how organisations in the hospitality industry work. They have also gained experience in nursery schools, solicitors offices, on construction sites, in engineering and mechanics.
- Learners make good progress during their time in the nurture group, due to good teaching and access to an appropriate, stimulating curriculum. The nurturing approach that staff take to developing learners' confidence and self-belief ensures that learners make rapid progress in pursuing their personal interests and acquiring basic skills.
- Learners' behaviour is good. Staff encourage learners to adopt a variety of coping

strategies, for them to have ownership and control over their own feelings and actions. Staff have good relationships with parents and work closely with families to encourage good attendance.

- Learners benefit from regular, impartial careers advice. They visit colleges and various places of work, find out about specific areas of employment, and learn about the skills needed for different occupations from visiting speakers. All of these measures enable learners to make informed choices about their options after Clarence High.
- The nurture group leader is currently looking at models for assessing pupils' personal development, in relation to various nurturing principles. All staff ensure that the same stringent safeguarding procedures in operation in key stages 2 to 4 are rigorously adhered to in the post-16 provision.

School details

Unique reference number	104975
DfE registration number	343/6131
Inspection number	10008521

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Proprietor	Nugent Care Society
Chair	Position vacant
Headteacher	Anthony Saleh
Annual fees (day pupils)	£52,000
Telephone number	01704 872151
Website	www.clarencehighschool.co.uk
Email address	tony.saleh@nugentcare.org
Date of previous inspection	11–12 December 2012

Information about this school

- By the end of the inspection, the school met the statutory requirements for the publication of information on its website.
- The school's vision states that 'Clarence High School offers day placements in a therapeutic setting for girls and boys aged seven to 18 years old, with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Clarence stands for improving the chances of young people who need extra support to achieve great things.'
- Clarence High School is in Formby, near Liverpool and opened in December 1984. The school is owned by Nugent (formerly Nugent Care), a charity run by trustees operating

since the 1880s, which offers a diverse range of social and educational provision.

- The school caters for up to 46 pupils. At the time of the inspection there were 17 pupils on roll, Year 11 pupils having recently left. All pupils have education, health and care plans. Some pupils are in the care of local authorities. The vast majority of pupils come to Clarence High School having missed significant periods of education and with poor skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school works with several colleges and other external training providers to arrange placements for pupils and learners in the post-16 provision. The school offers a range of therapies, most of which are provided in-house.
- Various staff have left the school since the previous inspection, including the principal and vice-principal, assistant headteacher, pastoral worker and several teachers and teaching assistants. New staff include the principal, three teachers and three members of the support staff.
- A small proportion of pupils benefit from post-16 provision, all of whom are educated in the school's nurture unit. Since the previous inspection, the school has developed a new teaching unit for key stage 2 pupils.
- At the time of the inspection the school and Nugent were going through structural changes, including changes to staff remits and line management. The post of chair of governors to the school was vacant.
- After the proprietor made a request to the Department for Education to change the age range of pupils at the school, a material change inspection took place on 24 February 2016 to check the school's suitability. After the inspection, the school was granted permission to change the age range of pupils from 10 to 18 years to seven to 18 years.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils in various lessons, including English, mathematics, science and physical education.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised during lessons and separately. Meetings were held with the headteacher and various staff. These including the assistant headteacher responsible for special educational needs, head of care, school therapist and staff responsible for assessment and the management of the nurture group.
- A telephone conversation took place with a representative from Nugent and a representative from Liverpool local authority.
- A meeting was held with a parent and pupil. Ad hoc discussions took place with pupils throughout the course of the inspection. A small number of text responses were considered.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's the online survey, Parent View, to be considered. The inspector scrutinised the school's own surveys of parents' and pupils' views. Responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by 22 members of staff were also considered.
- The quality of off-site provision was assessed, and visited, as part of the inspection.
- The inspector examined a range of documents. These included the school's reviews of its own performance, information on pupils' achievement, various safety and safeguarding policies and procedures and records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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