

The Clere School

Earlstone Common, Burghclere, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 9HP

Inspection dates

21–22 May 2019

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher's uncompromising vision and high expectations of what pupils can achieve in all aspects of their education have been at the heart of the school's improvement.
- Leaders check routinely that their actions are improving pupils' achievement. This enables them to act promptly to support pupils who need extra help.
- Middle leaders are determined and resolute in their drive to raise standards. Their leadership has contributed significantly to the sustained improvement of the school.
- Overall, current pupils are making good progress across year groups and in a range of subjects. In subjects such as English, where progress has not been strong in the past, leaders have taken action to ensure that current pupils are making better progress.
- Previously, disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and boys made slower progress than other pupils nationally. Leaders' actions have ensured that their progress is improving towards that of other pupils nationally.
- Governors are ambitious for the school. They use an in-depth knowledge of the school to challenge leaders to improve pupils' outcomes.
- Impartial careers guidance and well-organised work experience placements ensure that pupils are ready for their next steps in education.
- Teaching is good. Teachers strive to support pupils' learning and challenge them to make strong progress. Pupils receive useful feedback which they value and use to improve their work.
- Pupils are excellent ambassadors for The Clere School. They are polite, courteous and respectful to all and are proud of their school.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and are keen to succeed. They have an excellent attitude towards their learning and work well in collaboration with each other.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are effective. All staff place the well-being of pupils at the heart of everything they do.
- Pupils feel safe in school and have an understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Incidents of bullying are rare.
- Most pupils attend school regularly. Leaders' work with families to further improve attendance is increasingly successful.
- The quality of teaching and learning across the curriculum has improved and continues to do so. However, there are still some pockets where expectations of pupils' achievement are not sufficiently high.
- While the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND is improving, teachers do not focus sharply enough on overcoming barriers to learning so that they make faster progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by developing further the leadership skills of middle leaders so that they can assess precisely the impact of their actions on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Minimise variability in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers maintain a strong focus on overcoming the barriers to learning among disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND so that they make strong progress
 - all pupils are challenged sufficiently from their different starting points to reach the high standards of which they are capable
 - subject programmes of study are carefully sequenced, relevant and ambitious so that they enable pupils to make further progress, especially in English.
- Improve pupils' attendance further by continuing to take effective action to ensure that all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, attend school more regularly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is steadfast in his ambition to improve the quality of education for all pupils. He has created a culture of high expectations that is visible throughout the school community. This has resulted in an improvement in the school since the last inspection.
- Leaders' analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is accurate and robust. They continue to take appropriate action to improve the school. They monitor improvements through the regular scrutiny of pupils' progress information. This effective self-evaluation has been central in improving pupils' outcomes.
- Senior leaders' actions have improved the effectiveness of middle leadership. A significant staffing restructuring, in conjunction with training and improved accountability measures, has increased middle leaders' capacity to improve teaching and learning throughout the school. As a result, pupils now experience a more coherent and consistent approach to learning in their lessons.
- Leaders' drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning over the last two years has been effective. They have ensured that the expectations that they have for teaching and learning are clearly understood by all staff. Leaders' precise monitoring and evaluation of teaching mean that they hold staff to account well and focus on areas which need further development.
- School leaders have introduced detailed and thorough tracking to identify pupils' underperformance. Middle leaders and teachers are held to account effectively over this information. This has improved pupils' progress and teaching and learning.
- Leaders and governors have successfully overcome previous difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff. Through effective training, raising staff aspiration and a recruitment drive, leaders and governors have successfully stabilised staffing.
- Staff morale is high. Staff speak favourably of the way that leaders use professional development to encourage, challenge and support their improvement. This has created an open-door culture where staff can share ideas and discuss how to further improve.
- Leaders' actions have ensured that pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. At key stage 4, they are able to study a wide range of largely academic subjects. Despite previous recruitment and retention issues, leaders have maintained this breadth of offer.
- Within subjects, leaders have recognised the importance of constructing programmes of study carefully to meet pupils' needs. These seek increasingly to match the level of challenge to pupils' previous learning and to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. However, leaders' evaluation of teaching is focused overly on teaching methodology. They do not analyse sharply the effectiveness of the programmes of study or take into account how well pupils are achieving challenging curriculum goals.
- Leaders have ensured that the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong, particularly through well-designed personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons. These range from lessons on parliamentary

democracy to emotional well-being. These activities help to broaden pupils' views of the world and prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

- Leaders responsible for pupils with SEND have acted swiftly to improve the quality of support for these pupils. They have made staff training in this area a priority and pupils with SEND are closely monitored. This, in combination with leaders' careful matching of adults' expertise with pupils' SEND needs, has resulted in an improvement in pupils' progress.
- Leaders use the Year 7 catch-up funding well to support pupils who enter the school with below-average attainment in English and mathematics. The reading scheme that they have introduced is particularly inspiring boys to read, and many have made significant gains. Leaders now use this scheme to improve the reading skills of some older pupils in key stage 3.
- Senior leaders have sought to address the historically weak progress of disadvantaged pupils. They now use pupil premium funding increasingly effectively to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils, for instance by improving their attendance and tracking their progress more carefully. Their progress is improving but leaders have not ensured that they analyse the specific needs of these pupils in order to identify and remove the barriers to their learning.
- Leaders have ensured that the taught curriculum is enhanced with a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Many pupils participate in these. However, there is a proportion of pupils who do not take up these opportunities.
- Parents and carers are supportive of the school. Of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, a large majority would recommend the school to other parents. Parents commented positively on the improved leadership, the caring environment and the progress that their children are making.

Governance of the school

- Governors are ambitious and determined in their aspiration for the school to provide the very best education for all pupils. They have a clear vision for the school and work closely with school leaders through purposeful meetings and regular visits. Working in partnership has enabled them to bring about sustained improvement in the school.
- Governance of the school is strong. Governors utilise their extensive experience and knowledge to carry out their statutory duties diligently. They have accessed useful and appropriate training to ensure that they are well equipped to be effective in their roles.
- Governors receive detailed information about the quality of provision in the school. They use this to challenge school leaders through pertinent questions. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use this well to hold school leaders to account.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding is afforded the highest priority in the school. They keep and maintain comprehensive and meticulous records. Procedures for the recruitment of new staff are robust.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff training in safeguarding is thorough and updated regularly. Staff are aware of the need to be vigilant. Clear procedures for reporting safeguarding concerns are in place. Staff confidently report concerns and leaders follow up issues raised swiftly and scrupulously.
- Pupils verify that they feel safe in school and know who to speak to should they have any concerns. They trust the school to act on anything that they tell teachers. Their views are endorsed by parents, who agree that their children are cared for and looked after at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The basis of the school's improvement since the last inspection is a collective will to improve pupils' learning across all classrooms. Pupils' views reflect the progress that the school has made. For instance, a group of Year 9 pupils praised the noticeable improvements that they have witnessed, attributing this to the increased level of challenge that they are given routinely in lessons.
- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning across the curriculum is tenacious and unremitting. As a result, the quality of teaching in the majority of curricular areas has improved. Staff have good subject knowledge and use lesson time wisely to enable pupils to make progress. For instance, in a practical design and technology lesson, pupils worked alongside their teacher to produce high-quality pieces of work to a tight deadline.
- Effective planning and the innovative use of a range of teaching strategies stimulate pupils' interest and inquisitiveness. For example, in a lesson on trigonometry, the teacher planned effectively so that pupils were required to use their prior learning. This drew out possible misconceptions, forced pupils to reason mathematically and promoted their strong progress. This effective planning creates a consistently productive environment in which pupils work hard to achieve.
- Teachers' questioning draws out pupils' learning and deepens their thinking effectively. In the best instances, these questions set up a conversation in which teachers push pupils to think carefully, elaborate their answers and explain their ideas. As a result, pupils consolidate their understanding and make good progress.
- Staff create a warm working ethos in which pupils can flourish. They build strong relationships through encouragement and support. Pupils are confident in asking for advice and guidance and teachers use their enthusiasm to foster a genuine interest in learning.
- Teachers' ambitions for their pupils are high. They have a good understanding of pupils' strengths and weaknesses and have high expectations of them. In the majority of classrooms, the school policy on structuring learning to secure, develop and

challenge pupils' learning is evident. Pupils speak sensibly about the choices that they make when learning. They approach their work with enthusiasm and determination and readily accept the challenges that teachers provide.

- Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their learning and how they can improve their work. For instance, in English in key stage 4, pupils frequently revisit their work and reshape their answers, based on classroom discussions and advice from their teacher. As a result, pupils understand what they have done well and then go on to achieve even more.
- Teachers set useful homework in line with the school's policy. This consolidates pupils' learning and ensures that they are well prepared for subsequent lessons.
- Mostly, staff encourage pupils to grapple with new ideas and produce work that is of a high standard. However, there are still some pockets of variability in the quality of teaching. Sometimes, teachers do not challenge pupils effectively enough. As a result, pupils' work lacks depth, is often unfinished and lacks pride. Where this happens, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not always ensure that disadvantaged pupils make sufficient progress. In lessons, they do not use strategies aimed at overcoming pupils' specific barriers to learning sufficiently well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils report that they feel safe in school and that bullying is extremely rare. Should they have any concerns, they are confident that staff will listen and act promptly. This exemplifies the strong sense of trust that exists between pupils and staff.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Pupils told inspectors about the importance of online privacy when using social media and how they have been taught to protect themselves from risks.
- The programme for pupils' PSHE education is comprehensive and delivered well. This encompasses a wide range of pertinent and topical issues that prepare pupils effectively for life in modern Britain. As a result, pupils are respectful to each other and strongly believe that people should be treated equally and differences valued.
- Parents commented on the inclusive and caring nature of the school. Views such as 'I feel that The Clere is fully inclusive. Every child really does matter' are typical. Others commented, 'We are delighted with the caring environment of this close-knit school', illustrating parents' opinions. However, a small number of parents expressed concern about communication from the school.
- Leaders monitor closely the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision. Leaders at alternative providers praised the school for its inclusivity, flexibility and willingness to work with pupils. Leaders keep in close contact with these providers, sharing information to ensure that pupils are safe and make progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave consistently well in lessons and there is little wasted time. They are respectful to each other and to their teachers, and work together productively and enthusiastically. As a result, classrooms are places of collaboration and collective effort, with pupils keen to learn and motivated to achieve.
- High standards of behaviour in classrooms extend to practical lessons. For instance, when completing practical science lessons, pupils are acutely aware of the health and safety issues and conduct themselves in a safe manner.
- Pupils' behaviour as they move around the school between lessons and at social times is relaxed and orderly. At breaks and lunchtimes, pupils sit in small groups, talking and eating in a friendly atmosphere. They then move swiftly and punctually to lessons. There is little boisterous behaviour in corridors and there is a palpable sense of calm throughout the school day.
- Pupils are proud of their school and courteous and polite to visitors. The vast majority of pupils wear their uniform with pride. Pupils look after the fabric of the school well.
- Leaders have prioritised raising pupils' attendance and are passionate and determined that pupils attend regularly. They have taken effective measures to promote pupils' attendance, including through more effective monitoring and by working positively with parents to highlight the importance of pupils' regular attendance. As a result, while overall attendance and the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are below the national averages for secondary schools, they are improving.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' rates of progress declined. However, more recently, they have improved considerably so that, in 2018, the progress made by pupils at the end of key stage 4 across the curriculum was broadly average. There have been particular improvements in mathematics and in the open group of subjects. The progress of the most able pupils has improved and is continuing to improve, especially in mathematics.
- The attainment of almost all groups of pupils at the end of Year 11 in their best eight subjects (Attainment 8) is broadly in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who achieve a strong pass in English and mathematics is above national averages for most groups of pupils.
- The pattern of rising achievement is continuing for current pupils. Leaders have introduced increasingly thorough tracking of pupils' progress. This enables them to identify when pupils make slower progress and intervene appropriately. As a result, there is a much greater sense of accountability for pupils' progress at all levels of leadership, which is directly contributing to pupils' raised outcomes.
- In addition to the school's own progress information, work in pupils' books indicates that progress is continuing to improve. Pupils' work in English, mathematics, computing, music, history and across the wider curriculum in key stages 3 and 4 is indicative of this improved progress. Where there is variability in the quality of

teaching, this is reflected in the weaker progress made by pupils in the depth of their work.

- Leaders have taken appropriate action to address historic low rates of pupils' progress in English. As a result, pupils' progress in English is starting to improve.
- Senior leaders acknowledge that improving the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND remains a key priority. In several subjects, their actions are impacting positively on the progress of these pupils. However, because the effective use of strategies to support these pupils in overcoming barriers to their learning is inconsistent, so is their progress.
- Leaders have revised carefully the reading programme for Year 7 pupils who need extra help in English. This has resulted in some very substantial gains. Leaders have now extended this programme to pupils in other year groups in order to improve their reading.
- The few pupils who attend alternative provision are monitored closely and usually make better progress than they did previously in school. Leaders work effectively with these providers to ensure that this is the case.
- Pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training. They have access to impartial careers advice and receive guided support to arrange meaningful work experience placements. In 2018, almost all pupils went on to further education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	116430
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10088132

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	451
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Oppenheimer
Headteacher	Benjamin Bond
Telephone number	01635 278 372
Website	www.clere.hants.sch.uk/
Email address	J.piper@clere.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 February–1 March 2017

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized 11 to 16 comprehensive school.
- There are slightly more boys than girls on roll.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and therefore eligible for pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 32 lessons and parts of lessons across a range of subjects and year groups. The majority of these visits were undertaken jointly with members of the school leadership team.
- Inspectors visited two tutor group sessions and also observed an assembly.
- Inspectors analysed 92 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. Inspectors also took account of the responses from staff and pupils to their online questionnaires.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, governors, teachers and pupils. They scrutinised pupils' written work in detail.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, while moving between lessons and at break and lunchtime.
- A wide range of documentation was considered by inspectors, including: policies; curriculum information; safeguarding and child protection records; information about pupils' attendance and behaviour; the school's improvement plan and the evaluation of its effectiveness; minutes of local governing body meetings; subject programmes of study; and information about pupils' achievement.

Inspection team

Ian Tustian, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Patrick Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Suzanne Richards	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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