

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Clare's School

Rough Heanor Road, Mickleover, Derby, Derbyshire DE3 9AZ

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2023

Outcome

St Clare's School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive here. They can gain GCSE and functional skills qualifications in many different subjects. Parents and carers are full of praise for the school. Many parents report that the staff have real belief in the pupils. One typical parental comment being, 'When nobody else believes in them, the staff here do.'

Pupils and staff share a culture of respect and dignity. Consequently, positive relationships exist. Staff know the pupils very well. They anticipate when pupils might struggle to regulate themselves. Consequently, staff take effective action to help ensure that pupils do not become overwhelmed. Pupils behave very well. They say that they feel safe and are respected.

The wider curriculum offer is exceptional. For example, pupils take part in an enterprise week. Here, pupils pitch their ideas, form a company and make products for Christmas. Pupils have opportunities for work experience. Close links with local businesses mean that pupils are well prepared for what the world can offer them. Pupils have various opportunities to learn about the wider world. They take part in musical performances. Pupils enjoy making multimedia productions. They learn that there are no 'glass ceilings' for them.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are highly ambitious. They are determined for pupils to succeed. Pupils learn a broad range of subjects. Each subject has its own learning journey. This journey specifies the knowledge that pupils must learn and the order in which they learn it. This helps pupils learn more and remember more over time. Pupils learn the curriculum well. The curriculum teaches pupils to answer three questions: who am I? where am I? and where are we? For example, in humanities, pupils learn about their own personal history; the history of Derby, Bonnie Prince Charlie and the impact of the First World War on their local area. This helps pupils to better understand their world.

Teachers have expert knowledge of both the subjects they teach and of their pupils. Consequently, teachers plan activities that consistently meet the needs of the pupils.

Pupils' work is of an exceptionally high quality. For example, in science, pupils learn new and challenging vocabulary such as horizontally, spark and reaction. In English, pupils wrote revolting rhymes based on the story of the Three Little Pigs. One pupil had written, 'The decoy pig with a pink mohawk wig!'

Leaders have prioritised reading. Pupils read in school every day. Leaders check how well pupils can read when they join the school. Teachers plan work that helps pupils to read fluently and confidently. Teachers use a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics and early reading. Teachers are well trained. Therefore, pupils excel in learning to read, and communicating with others.

Pupils have appropriate reading targets on their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Teachers use these targets to plan highly effective lessons. This work helps to ensure that pupils can access the full curriculum.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Teachers use tools such as 'zones of regulation.' These zones allow pupils to think about how they are feeling and adapt their behaviour accordingly. Teachers know the strategies that help to keep pupils calm. There is very little low-level disruption. Pupils behave very well in lessons and in social times.

The curriculum for pupils' personal development is particularly strong. All pupils in Year 10 take part in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. There is a thriving forest school where pupils learn about nature, communication and teamwork. The school therapy dog is much beloved. It helps to calm and regulate pupils' behaviour. Pupils act as ambassadors to the local authority. They can therefore communicate the issues that are important to them. Pupils have a strong understanding of democracy as they take part in voting for the city youth mayor.

Leaders engage well with staff about their workload and well-being. The trust and school leaders work with staff to help make workload more manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding exists in the school. Leaders ensure that staff know how to spot the potential signs of when pupils could be at risk. Staff know how and when to report any safeguarding concerns. Leaders respond quickly. Leaders keep track of concerns over time. They check on the actions taken.

Leaders make sure that pupils get the help they need swiftly. Leaders seek help from outside agencies as well as the local authority. The governing body undertake frequent safeguarding checks.

Leaders undertake the necessary checks on new staff before they are appointed.

Background

When we have judged a school outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the third ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, the school to be outstanding in January 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	147137
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10281525
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	144
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Emly
Headteacher	Laura Russell
Website	https://stclaresschool.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the ESTEEM multi-academy trust in August 2019. When its predecessor school, also called St Clare’s School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. These include social, emotional and mental health difficulties, autism spectrum disorder, physical disability and moderate and severe learning difficulties.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in English, reading, science and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.

- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke to leaders, inspected the single central record, examined child protection records, examined recruitment folders, talked to staff and pupils regarding safeguarding arrangements, and talked to governors about strategic oversight of safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted’s parent, staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors viewed pupil behaviour at break and lunchtimes, and in lessons.

Inspection team

Steven Barnes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Javier Sanchez-Garcia

Ofsted Inspector

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