

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Clare School

South Park Avenue, Norwich, Norfolk NR4 7AU

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 January 2025

Outcome

The Clare School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Clare School provides an exceptional environment for pupils. Warmth and happiness are in abundance, and pupils benefit enormously from the kind, compassionate and highly skilled staff. Pupils have complex care needs, and many do not communicate verbally. Nevertheless, whatever their ability, adults help them to achieve highly, doing what is right for each individual pupil. Consequently, pupils love their time in school and behave extremely well. Whether in large leaps or manageable steps every pupil's learning is celebrated and recognised.

Pupils' welfare is top priority. Skilled staff provide the care and attention pupils need to help manage their health and welfare needs. This ensures that pupils are treated with respect and dignity when receiving care, and as far as possible pupils' medical needs do not detract from their time in lessons and with friends.

Whether through braille, sign language, 'eye gaze' technology or spoken word, pupils are skilfully guided to express their needs and ideas through whichever means they can. Their voices are heard loud and clear. Most recently, this led to pupils designing and helping with the building of the newly created memorial garden. This is a calming and reflective place where staff and pupils can reflect and cherish the memories of their friends who have passed away.

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

The curriculum is built around the needs of each individual pupil. Pupils receive a highly personalised curriculum that is precisely suited to their complex needs. Leaders and staff seamlessly integrate within the curriculum the expected outcomes from pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. Adults know the needs of every pupil in great detail, which means they are crystal clear on what pupils need to learn and be able to do next. This means that from the early years through to the sixth form, pupils receive a rich and high quality of education and care. Pupils, whatever their starting point or individual needs, achieve extremely well.

As a result of regular, high-quality training, adults teach the curriculum remarkably well. They seize every opportunity to recap and revise what pupils have learned already. Clear explanations and instructions help pupils have confidence to carry out tasks and be successful.

Communication sits at the heart of the school. From the early years, children learn to make choices and express their needs. Staff model spoken language with great clarity. They provide high-quality support. This enables children to express themselves clearly whether through speech, sign or communication devices. Opportunities to learn and practice communication are woven throughout the school day. Consequently, pupils develop the communication skills and knowledge they need with ever growing independence.

A small number of pupils learn to read by using phonics. Pupils who follow the schools' early reading programme learn this extremely well. This is because adults are expert in teaching phonics. They check with care that pupils have a grasp of a particular sound before moving on. Those with visual or hearing impairments learn phonics if they can. This is because staff are adept at making the necessary adaptation to the phonics programme to meet the individual needs of these pupils. Pupils develop a love of books, as they hear a range of stories, rhymes and songs.

The school is a harmonious place where individuals are celebrated for who they are. Behaviour in and around the school is exceptional. Older pupils look out for younger ones and help them where they can. For example, when in the garden, older pupils gently guide and support the younger pupils to sweep up the fallen leaves, helping them to use a broom safely.

Pupils are prepared superbly for their futures. The school's fine work to develop pupils' independence, through the schools' meticulously designed programme, pays dividends. This means, and especially as they move in to the sixth form, that pupils and students learn to travel with increasing independence, purchase food and drink in cafes and shops, and communicate with a range of people with ever growing confidence.

Pupils receive rich opportunities beyond the classroom. Many pupils enjoy and experience residential opportunities, such as trips to the Lake District and more local opportunities in Norfolk. Others stayed in a London hotel the night before playing in the national table cricket finals at Lord's cricket ground. The school also provides the opportunity for others to have a 'sleepover' with friends. For many this is a new experience. These opportunities provide the chance to develop independence. They also, and perhaps more importantly for pupils and their families, make fond memories that will last forever.

Students leave the school at the end of sixth form through a smooth and well-designed transition programme. This means that pupils go on to placements that are well matched to the individual needs.

The school provides highly effective support to help those who find regular attendance difficult. Leaders keep a sharp eye on attendance and work with families to overcome issues that may prevent pupils coming to school.

The governing body is highly strategic in its work. It provides unwavering support for leaders. While this is the case, the governing body does not shy away from asking probing questions of leaders to ensure that the school continues to improve. Staff are proud to be part of the school. They are well supported by leaders because the well-being of adults is high on the agenda.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in November 2011.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	121261
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10345256
Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	128
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	23
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Karen Gardner
Headteacher	Rebecca Wicks
Website	www.clareschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Clare School provides for pupils with physical disabilities and sensory impairments. Every pupil has an EHC plan. Many pupils require complex medical care. A high proportion of pupils have life-limiting conditions.
- Children can join the school from the age of three years and can remain there until they are 19 years old.
- The headteacher started her role after the previous inspection. As the number of pupils in school has risen since then, many other staff and leaders have joined the school in the last few years.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteachers and a range of other school staff. The lead inspector held a meeting with members of the governing board and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including attendance records, pupil records, records of governing board meetings, school development plans and school self-evaluation documents.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View survey, and Ofsted's online staff survey.

Inspection team

Nathan Lowe, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Heather Hann

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025