



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Clarence High School

Education Area: Independent

Dates of inspection: 29 and 30 November 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Clarence High School
Type of school:	Special
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Principal:	Mr D McKillop
Address of school:	31 West Lane Freshfield Formby Liverpool L37 7AZ
Telephone:	01704 872151
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The Nugent Care Society, address as above
Chair of governors:	Mr T Curran
Local education authority area:	Independent
Unique reference number:	104975
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr E Craven HMI
Dates of inspection:	29 and 30 November 2004

Introduction

1. Clarence High School is situated in Freshfield within the Merseyside area. It is an independent residential and day school for boys and girls who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school is run by a North West of England charity, The Nugent Care Society. The school can accommodate up to 60 pupils, including 30 in residential provision. There are currently 42 pupils on roll, including 12 girls, and just over half of the pupils reside at the school for term-time only. Many of the pupils have been excluded from other schools and some have missed periods of their education; as a consequence the pupils' attainment on entry is generally below average. All of the pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need and four pupils are in public care. There are no pupils who are of non-British heritage and none has English as an additional language. Approximately half of the pupils come from three local education authorities in the North of England and Wales, whilst the remainder are from various parts of England.

1. The school was inspected in January 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

2. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of January 2002. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on six occasions to monitor the progress being made.

2. In November 2004, one HMI and one Additional Inspector returned to inspect the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of January 2002.

Main findings

2. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- the standards attained by the pupils in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are below average. The pupils' attainments in GCSE examinations in Year 11, at entry and foundation levels in a limited range of subjects, are low. The standards attained by most of the pupils in the lessons were also below age-related expectations;
 - the pupils make satisfactory progress in most lessons, particularly where planning, organisation and the pace of work match their distinctive abilities and needs;
 - the pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved from a low base and are satisfactory overall. Strategies for managing behaviour are consistently applied and have proved effective, although there remain pockets of unsatisfactory behaviour from a few pupils. The pupils' attitudes are more
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positive as a consequence of the increasingly interesting and varied curriculum, improved teaching, and efforts to get the pupils to take more pride in the school;

- attendance has improved since January 2002 and currently stands at 81 per cent. However, it remains unsatisfactory;
- provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Regular school gatherings promote the school as a community and, in addition, assemblies foster a Christian understanding. Relationships throughout the school are good overall. The teaching of religious education is sound and the pupils' learning about other religions and cultures is enriched by visits and visitors. The pupils are given a range of appropriate opportunities to make a contribution to the work of the school and the wider community;
- the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in all but one of the lessons; it was good in over one third. Significantly, the sample of lessons included both National Curriculum core and foundation subjects. There is a wide range of factors which support effective teaching, particularly the planning and resourcing of lessons, the balance in the work, the control of the pupils, and the support provided by classroom assistants;
- the curriculum is broad and, in the main, well balanced. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is improving but it is used insufficiently to support the pupils' learning in different subjects. The range and scope of the curriculum are enhanced by the effective links which are made with local colleges of further education, the opportunities for work experience, and the extracurricular arrangements for the pupils;
- there are robust systems for the initial assessment of pupils' attainment and, thereafter, for the systematic setting of targets for raising individual achievement. The data relating to pupils' attainments are well used in planning the curriculum;
- the leadership and management of the school are good overall. The recent establishment of a successful and influential senior management team has brought the necessary stability. The principal provides very good leadership and he has improved management at all levels. The senior team shares a vision for the school and each member has embraced key responsibilities for areas of the school's work; they are becoming increasingly effective in leading and managing their staff teams. The governors and The Nugent Care Society are discharging their responsibilities well and are holding the school appropriately to account;
- the school's arrangements for monitoring its performance have improved significantly and are good. Lesson observations are regularly undertaken by senior staff, and data is gathered and analysed with increasing effectiveness. Self-evaluation is becoming an established feature of the school's improvement processes and it is being applied by staff at all levels.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, principal, senior managers and staff need to:

- continue to raise standards;
- improve attendance;
- increase the use of ICT to support learning in different subjects.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

3. The standards attained by the pupils in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are well below average. Pupils' attainments in GCSE examinations in Year 11, at the entry and foundation levels in a limited range of subjects, are low. The school is, however, developing appropriate systems for the external accreditation of the pupils' achievements at the end of Key Stage 4, beyond the scope of national examinations.

8. The standards attained by the pupils in the lessons were also well below age-related expectations. Nevertheless, most pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons and their achievements are often good, given their levels of prior attainment in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 as well as their special educational needs.

4. The school has effective systems for assessing the pupils' levels of attainment on entry. Good use is made of the data in setting realistic targets in line with the pupils' individual education plans and for the raising of standards of attainment. Thereafter, there is a rigorous evaluation of progress which embraces pastoral as well as academic achievement. The arrangements, which represent a significant strength in the school's procedures, are consolidated by the pupils' own regular self-review of their progress and, particularly, by the involvement of all members of the staff, including teaching assistants and care personnel. The systems involved, and the data produced, are increasingly influential in enabling the planning, organisation and pace of the lessons to match the pupils' distinctive abilities and identified needs.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved from a low base and are satisfactory overall. They were satisfactory in six lessons, good in five and unsatisfactory in two. A working party has been influential in focusing staff on the better management of the pupils' behaviour. Strategies for managing behaviour are consistently applied and have promoted improvement. However, there remain pockets of unsatisfactory behaviour from a few pupils in lessons. Behaviour on the corridors is less well controlled and is boisterous at times. The school recognises this as an area for improvement. Data on behavioural incidents is gathered and analysed and, as a consequence, some pupils have behavioural targets. There are suitable plans to combine data on the rewards achieved by the pupils with data on misconduct to enable further analysis. The number of exclusions is reducing. Six pupils

were excluded for a total of 30 days in the period from June to November 2004, while in the comparable period in the previous year 11 pupils were excluded for a total of 59 days.

11. The pupils' attitudes are more positive as a consequence of the increasingly interesting and varied curriculum, improved teaching, and efforts to get the pupils to take more pride in the school. A review of the school's arrangements for pastoral support has led to an increase in tutor-time and class tutors having more responsibility. The roles of the care staff have been reviewed and they are successfully contributing to the pupils' personal and social development, principally as key workers providing individual programmes of support. Pastoral support has become appropriately more proactive than reactive and there has been an increase in the number of merits and certificates earned by many of the pupils. Fewer pupils leave lessons and, when they do, they follow the agreed system; there are also fewer detentions. All pupils wear school uniform and many represent the school in sporting and other competitions; they talk proudly of these occasions. The pupils want to be at the school and, on the whole, they value the education they receive.

12. Attendance has improved since January 2002 and currently stands at 81 per cent. The poor attendance of a small number of pupils significantly influences the overall figure; eight pupils have attendance rates below 55 per cent. The limited contact the school has with the families of pupils who come to the school from great distances impedes its efforts to make inroads into the attendance problems of some pupils. Nevertheless, whilst the school is applying a range of strategies to improve attendance, it remains unsatisfactory.

13. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Regular whole-school gatherings promote the school as a community and, in addition, assemblies foster a Christian understanding; pupils are benefiting from the occasions when they lead the gatherings. Rewards for the pupils are prominent and there are frequent opportunities for them to celebrate their own successes. Relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves are good overall. Displays around the school prominently present positive messages about anti-bullying, healthy schools, respect, democracy and the raising of achievement. The teaching of religious education is sound and the pupils' learning about other religions and cultures is enriched by visits and visitors. They are given a range of appropriate opportunities to make a contribution to the work of the school and the wider community through charitable fundraising and in-school enterprise schemes. The school council is valued by the pupils and the head girl and the acting head boy described how older pupils were providing valuable support for the younger pupils who have particular difficulties.

The quality of education

14. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in all but one of the lessons: it was good in over one third of lessons. Significantly, the sample of lessons included a range within the National Curriculum core and foundation subjects. There has been a continuing improvement in the overall quality of teaching during the period of special measures.

15. There is a wide range of factors which support effective teaching. The planning of lessons is good and, usually, there is an effective balance in the variety of activities assigned to pupils, supported by well-selected resources. The planning framework, which includes a clear specification of objectives in each lesson, enables the most successful teachers to make

necessary adjustments to planned work in the light of the pupils' responses and, at its best, this has a significant effect on the quality of the learning.

4. The teachers' subject knowledge is sound overall. The work was particularly effective when the teacher showed a good appreciation of the nature of the subject and its contribution to coherent learning. Significantly, in the minority of lessons where this element was neglected, both the quality of the learning and the behaviour of the pupils were adversely affected.

4. The school's strategies for improving the quality of teaching and learning are good. They are underpinned by well-targeted classroom observations, the arrangements for feedback to teachers, and the subsequent links to the professional development of the staff. The process involves teachers, classroom assistants and care staff, and results in the mutual development of all concerned; it is a main component in the raising of standards.

4. The school has been resourceful in establishing strong links with a range of external providers within a comprehensive programme of staff development. The school's improvement has also been facilitated by adopting elements of national initiatives, such as the Key Stage 3 Strategy and reform of the work force.

4. The curriculum is broad and, in the main, well balanced. The provision for ICT is too limited, though the school already has arrangements to address this issue. The range and scope of the curriculum are enhanced by: the effective links which are made with local education authorities and colleges of further education; the opportunities for work experience; and the extracurricular arrangements for residential pupils. The school is rigorous in undertaking systematic curricular reviews and subject audits, and the arrangements for negotiating a relevant curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are very good. In this regard the partnership between form tutors, subject leaders and key care workers, as well as with external providers, represents a major strength in curriculum planning.

4. There are robust systems for the initial assessment of the pupils' prior attainments on entry at varying points in Key Stage 3 and 4. Thereafter, there is systematic setting of academic as well as personal targets for raising individual achievement. Critical to the process is the close link between teaching, ancillary support and welfare staff, as reflected in the composition of the senior management team. The comprehensive data relating to pupils' attainments and their personal development is well used in planning the school's curriculum.

Leadership and management

4. The leadership and management of the school are good overall. Following an unsettled period, when transitional arrangements were in place, the recent establishment of a permanent and successful senior management team has brought the necessary stability. The principal provides very good leadership and he has improved management at all levels. He has a secure view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The values of open and transparent management espoused by the principal have been well received by the staff and have contributed to a clarity of understanding and raising of expectations. The senior management team shares a vision for the school and each member has embraced key responsibilities for areas of the school's work; they are becoming increasingly effective in leading and managing their staff teams. The principal has wisely adopted a mainly strategic role for himself and has begun to delegate further management duties to senior staff.

22. The school's arrangements for monitoring its performance have improved significantly and are good. Lesson observations are regularly undertaken by senior staff and feedback to teachers includes the identification of areas for improvement; staff are being suitably responsive to this process. The arrangements for the management of care staff and teaching assistants have been bolstered by the head of care and the senior teaching assistant being members of the senior management team; they hold their teams to account. Data on the pupils' attainment and behaviour is gathered and analysed with increasing effectiveness. Self-evaluation is becoming an established feature of the school's improvement processes and it is being applied by staff at all levels. Although the school council makes a contribution to aspects of school development there are suitable plans to increase the contributions the pupils make to the school's self-review.

23. Training for staff is a high priority. Members of the senior management team are responsible for the professional development of their teams and this is suitably co-ordinated and monitored by the principal. Appropriate emphasis is being placed on training for non-teaching staff as well as teachers. Staff are well supported in increasing their expertise in gaining recognised qualifications; three staff, including non-teaching staff, are currently being helped by the school in training to become qualified teachers.

24. The governors and The Nugent Care Society have rightly developed more strategic roles and are allowing the staff to manage the school on a day-to-day basis. They are discharging their responsibilities well and are holding the school to account with more rigour. There are good relationships between the principal, the governors and The Nugent Care Society. Governors are appropriately challenging and questioning of the work of the school. The curriculum committee meets regularly with senior staff and there are plans for co-ordinators to report to the committee on their subjects. The governors have arranged for ongoing training with a local education authority and for further focused visits to the school to observe lessons. There is a growing sense of purpose in the work of the governing body.

Implementation of the action plan

25. The inspection report of January 2002 required the school to address eight key issues and three minor issues. The key issues related to: establishing a cohesive senior management team; improving the arrangements for the management of staff; allowing the school to manage staff development; improving the involvement of the governors in the work of the school; improving the quality of teaching; improving pupils' progress in all subjects; improving the pupils' attendance and their attitudes and behaviour in lessons; and giving health and safety a much higher profile. The minor issues related to: developing a more appropriate curriculum; improving the quality of links with parents; and improving the opportunities for the pupils' cultural development. There has been good progress in all issues apart from the key issue related to improving the pupils' progress in all subjects, where there has been reasonable progress.

26. Following an unsettled period in trying to establish a senior management team, which included the appointment of a head of education for a short period, the school has established a permanent leadership and management team. The responsibilities of the various members of the team are clear and they are being very well led by the principal.

27. Line-management responsibilities have been made very clear and there are productive arrangements for the management of the school's education and care teams. Communication is good and staff morale is high.

4. The governors and The Nugent Care Society have given the principal autonomy to manage staff training. He has suitably delegated this to senior managers but maintains oversight of these arrangements. As a consequence, staff training has made a significant contribution to the school's improvement.

4. Progress on improving the involvement of governors has increased in the past year. The governors and The Nugent Care Society liaise well and the governing body has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

4. The pace of improvement in the quality of teaching was hampered by not having a settled senior management team and members not having clear responsibilities for improving teaching and learning. These arrangements are now in place and teaching is improving; it is satisfactory overall.

4. The pupils' rate of progress has increased and is satisfactory. Teaching has improved and pupils are learning more. The pupils' behaviour has also improved and has become less of an inhibitor to learning.

4. There has been a review of the pastoral arrangements to make the role of the form tutor more significant. This, along with an improved use of data on incidents of misconduct, has contributed to an improvement in the pupils' behaviour overall. The pupils have become more positive about their lessons, as teaching has improved and the curriculum has become more interesting. The pupils' rate of attendance has remained at about 81 per cent; this is unsatisfactory.

4. The concerns about health and safety have been addressed by the school; there are procedures and practices to ensure issues are addressed fully and promptly.

4. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is suitably broad and balanced, and at Key Stage 4 it is matched to the vocational needs of many pupils, with college provision and work experience being prominent. Statutory requirements are met.

4. The school's links with parents have improved. Communication, in the form of newsletters and individual contact, has been used effectively. The school is much more proactive in seeking ways to promote its partnership with parents.

4. The curriculum has been adjusted to improve the opportunities for the pupils to learn about different cultures; visits and visitors have added to the pupils' cultural experiences.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in January 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in September 2002, in January, May and September 2003, and in January and June 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of January 2002.

In November 2004, an HMI and an Additional Inspector returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Thirteen lessons or parts of lessons, two gatherings and one assembly were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunchtimes and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the principal, senior staff, two representatives from the school's working party on behaviour, a governor and a representative from The Nugent Care Society; informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of January 2002 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.