

Claremont School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109391
Local Authority	Bristol, City of
Inspection number	309966
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Alison Ewins
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2005
School address	Henleaze Park Westbury-on-Trym Bristol BS9 4LR
Telephone number	0117 3533622
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Age group	2–14
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Claremont caters for pupils with physical disabilities and associated learning and communication difficulties. The vast majority have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, and a large majority have visual or multi-sensory impairment. The profile of pupil needs is highly specialised. The majority are from White British backgrounds with a small minority from a variety of other ethnic groups. The school opened a secondary department in September 2007 on a different site, which currently caters for Key Stage 3 pupils. The school has only very recently known that they will be running a sixth form from September 2008. The headteacher has been in post for two years. There is funded nursery provision for pupils with similar needs on site.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Claremont is an outstanding school where pupils thrive, achieve exceptionally well and develop into happy, more independent young people. Pupils in all age groups, including children in the Foundation Stage, make outstanding progress in their academic subjects and personal development, in their ability to communicate and in their mobility. This is due to very rigorous systems for assessing their achievements and planning to build upon these individually in every lesson and activity. It is made possible by outstanding leadership and management, leading to high quality teaching, and an excellent and very rich curriculum. The school is a hive of enthusiastic activity where pupils are very busy responding to challenges, concentrating very hard on the task in hand and joining in with all the social activities provided. Bright, lively faces greet visitors, and pupils willingly engage in conversations through their communication aids.

There are many exceptional features to the school, including a very wide-ranging use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enable pupils to access the curriculum in different ways. In addition, opportunities for pupils to work and socialise alongside their mainstream peers are extensive. The school works with a very wide array of other schools, organisations and agencies to make sure that every single pupil is receiving the best possible care, guidance, support and education. This includes continuous and thorough staff training in all the necessary areas of specialism, and very close links with parents.

Although pupils are very dependent upon adults for most of their physical, communication and learning needs, staff seek to ensure that they become as independent as possible. They are therefore helped to make an excellent contribution, for example by a strong involvement in the community, through the school council and in the daily task where every pupil has a responsibility, which they willingly carry out.

Parents are very positive about the school, as one parent typically commented, 'I can leave my son knowing that he is getting 100% care and teaching for his ability.' Pupils are equally positive, often indicating that they prefer school time to holidays.

The curriculum is exceptional because it is wholly adapted to meet each individual pupils' interests and needs whilst providing a very rich, exciting environment to enthuse and take learning forward on a number of levels. A great deal of high quality learning takes place outside the classroom and it was encouraging to see pupils enjoying the sunshine, grass and flowers during one communication session.

It is indicative of the outstanding qualities of leadership that the new secondary school is maintaining pupils' very high levels of achievement in all aspects of their education, despite the very tight timescales from its inception. With very little notice, the school is now preparing to receive sixth formers by September 2008. The 14-19 curriculum and the associated staff skills are not yet developed. School leaders fully recognise that this is essential if the high quality of education is to be continued as pupils move into Key Stage 4 and the new sixth formers arrive.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage provision is outstanding. As soon as children arrive, a thorough assessment is undertaken, working closely with parents and other agencies, to determine the exact needs and skills of each child. A high quality curriculum, expertly adapted from the national framework,

and outstanding teaching ensure that the children begin to make very rapid progress and achieve exceptionally well in all the areas of learning. Standards are well below national expectations in all areas of learning because pupils' learning and physical difficulties are complex and severe. The lessons are great fun and the children's enjoyment is evident as they squeal with delight at the antics of the puppet or the fun of watching the parachute go up and down over their heads. Their communication and physical development are particularly impressive with expert help on hand from the therapists on site. Very strong leadership ensures that the provision continues to improve. Nevertheless, managers realise that the planned use of the new outside learning space is underdeveloped. Children in the Foundation Stage receive some very good inclusion opportunities, which support their excellent personal development, self-confidence and ability to socialise with their mainstream peers.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Urgently seek to develop the 14-19 curriculum and associated staff skills, to secure the same high quality of education evident in the rest of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils in all ability and age groups make equally outstanding progress, including those in Key Stage 3. The knowledge and skills of the pupils when they start school, and the standards they attain, are well below national averages due to the nature of pupils' learning difficulties. Nevertheless, the learning levels gained each year are well above those normally found for children with similar difficulties in other schools. Outstanding progress is evident in a wide range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, ICT and personal and social education. Progress in history and geography, although sound, is not as rapid as it is in other subjects. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties quickly learn to engage with activities and respond by looking, or expressing pleasure or disapproval. The development of communication is outstanding. Pupils' ability to make their needs or opinions known, make choices or show their knowledge using different communication systems increases rapidly as they move through the school. The majority of pupils also make excellent progress in their physical independence and mobility and several are able to use electric wheelchairs or walk with the aid of a frame.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils love coming to school and many parents report that their children cannot wait for holidays to end. This enjoyment is reflected in good attendance despite the ongoing medical needs of the great majority of pupils. Their behaviour is outstanding and there are no recorded incidents of bullying, racism or any other unkind or harmful behaviour. Pupils behave very safely, work very hard, are keen to relate to visitors, and take part enthusiastically in all that they do. They demonstrate, through strong participation in the very many physical activities for example, a very good appreciation of how to lead healthy lives. Pupils' outstanding contribution to the school and wider community includes helping to choose new staff, influencing the type of activities that take place with other schools and taking part in the consultation process carried out by the local authority. With outstanding progress in their communication and independence skills, increasingly effective use of technology, excellent social skills and keen sense of responsibility pupils are very well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Lessons are typified by a wide variety of interesting activities and highly individualised learning objectives resulting in outstanding progress. Every pupil is helped to progress in a way that suits their needs and prior learning, because planning and ongoing assessment are very thorough. Lessons are full of laughter and celebration as pupils strive hard to meet their quite challenging targets. In one typical lesson, pupils were riveted as they composed and performed a very beautiful musical composition about the weather. There are many strengths in teaching, particularly the pervasive use of technology to help pupils access learning. In addition the highly specialised approaches used by teachers and learning support assistants alike ensure that pupils are able to learn regardless of the nature of their difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum is also highly specialised and accommodates pupils' special interests and skills very well so that learning is rapid. The sensory curriculum for those with very complex learning needs and sensory impairment is excellent and includes many imaginative opportunities for pupils to control their environment with switches, light and sound. The extensive use of signs and symbols helps pupils to understand what is happening and encourages improved communication. The curriculum is very rich with numerous opportunities to take part in projects, visits and performances. The curriculum to support pupils' personal development is also outstanding, including many opportunities to help them understand how to keep safe and healthy. Every part of the day is used to benefit and extend pupils' learning, including lunchtime where intensive one-to-one support is provided. Thorough programmes are in place to help pupils develop mobility and independence skills throughout the day. Productive links with other organisations, learning outside of the classroom and working with mainstream peers are key, high quality features of the provision. The secondary curriculum and staff skills are well suited to the needs of the pupils currently, but are not yet suitable for them as they move into Key Stage 4 or for the new sixth formers expected in September 2008.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Safeguarding procedures to ensure pupils' welfare are robust. Pupils are supported and guided exceptionally well in their personal development. A core element of this is the extensive and very close working relationships between the school and other agencies, which ensures that all therapies take place as part of the planned curriculum. The support and guidance given to help pupils make such good progress in the different subjects are outstanding. All progress, planning and target setting are monitored in detail and linked to every lesson objective. Each pupil, for example, has a set of cards on their wheelchair detailing the approaches necessary for them to take part in the different activities. There are considerable checks to ensure that assessment is accurate. Despite the concerns of one or two parents, parents are closely involved in this process and they are given excellent help to support their child's progress at home. The preparation for transition and induction is of equally high quality.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Senior leaders have shown outstanding qualities in maintaining and improving upon the already very strong rate of progress made by pupils. This has been achieved whilst setting up the entirely new and already successful secondary department with very little notice. Self-evaluation and monitoring are exceedingly thorough and leaders at all levels know the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well. As a result, various well targeted initiatives have increased the rate of progress pupils make in several areas, for example in number, particularly for the more able. Improved use of communication aids and inclusion has seen an increase in pupils' confidence, self-esteem and ability to relate to others. A passion for supporting equality of opportunity means that pupils who can benefit from it eventually move into mainstream schooling. The continuous training undertaken by all staff to support the work of the school is truly impressive, particularly in the field of communication and sensory impairment. School targets are very challenging, and in working towards them standards are kept as high as possible. This all demonstrates an excellent capacity to improve further. Governance is good and holds the school to account well, although with several new governors aspects of their role are still developing. The urgent task, as leaders recognise, is to ensure, despite the very tight timescale, that the 14–19 curriculum is developed to the same high standards as the rest of the provision. In keeping with the usual high quality of leadership, planning has already begun.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

9 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Claremont School, Bristol BS9 4LR

Thank you for being so welcoming when I visited your school. I enjoyed meeting you very much, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons.

Your school is very successful and extremely well run. It is an excellent school, just as you and your parents told me it was. It helps all of you to make outstanding progress in your subjects and personal skills. Your teachers and support staff are highly skilled at helping you to do your very best, and lessons are interesting and great fun. You are responsible, hard-working and you set a very fine example of how to behave. You clearly enjoy everything about your school, which is outstanding at keeping you safe and caring for you.

School leaders do an exceptionally good job in seeing that the school keeps improving. I have asked them to make sure that they are ready for the older secondary classes and sixth form by next September. You might like to share your ideas about this with them.

Your teachers see to it that you have a very interesting range of activities, clubs and visits and I liked the way you join in so enthusiastically with these. I am impressed with the way you take responsibility around the school and in the community. Your increasing independence and confidence in social situations helps prepare you very well for the future.

I wish you all the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely Patricia Potheary

Lead inspector

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I wish you all the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Potteccary', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lead inspector