

The Clare School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 121261 |
| Local Authority | Norfolk |
| Inspection number | 327439 |
| Inspection date | 12 March 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Ian Naylor |

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 3–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 86 |
| Sixth form | 19 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Anna Gill |
| Headteacher | Mr Nigel Smith |
| Date of previous school inspection | 26 January 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | South Park Avenue Norwich NR4 7AU |
| Telephone number | 01603454199 |
| Fax number | 01603451317 |

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|--------------------------|---------------|
| Age group | 3–19 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- Have improvements to assessment systems and their effective monitoring by co-ordinators had an impact upon raising achievements of pupils?
- Have the quality of school meals/nutritional standards improved?
- Is leadership overall of a consistently high quality?

Inspectors gathered evidence from parents' questionnaires and school documentation, observed lessons and held discussions with senior leaders, other staff and with pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessment given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and they have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Clare School is a community special school that provides for 95 boys and girls with complex needs. These include a range of learning difficulties associated with their physical disabilities, complex medical needs and/or sensory impairment. There are currently three children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and 19 in the sixth form provision. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and two-thirds have a care plan. Nine pupils have degenerative conditions. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is well below average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. Most are from White British backgrounds. A few are in the care of the local authority. Pupils come from most areas of Norfolk and from parts of North Suffolk. The school is subject to reorganisation as part of the implementation of Norfolk's Special Educational Needs Strategy. The school has applied for specialist school status in Sensory/physical disabilities. The school's work has gained key national and local recognition through the Basic Skills Mark, Healthy Schools Award, City and Guilds Medal for Excellence, Careers Excellence Standard, FA Charter School County Winner, Activemark and Sportsmark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Clare School is viewed by parents as highly effective and successful. Inspection confirms that it provides an outstanding quality of education for all its pupils and students. The excellent leadership provided by the headteacher and the senior leadership team has seen the school go from strength to strength since the last inspection. Staff are highly committed, experienced and well qualified. Consequently, pupils benefit from the highest quality of provision in all areas. They get enormous enjoyment and gain often quite remarkable success in their academic and social achievements. The school fully achieves its stated aim of producing pupils who are happy and confident. Staff provide a high quality of care. They act as outstanding role models and build supportive relationships with pupils. The school, therefore, exudes a calm, reassuring, purposeful and welcoming learning environment. One parent reflects the views of most, describing the school as, 'brilliant in every aspect!'

School governors play an active part in helping staff and pupils. They display outstanding leadership. Their contribution to the life of the school is excellent. They take their roles very seriously, understand their responsibilities and are involved in all aspects of school. They hold the headteacher and staff to account for the standards and ethos of the school and they contribute to excellent financial management.

Since the last inspection, senior leaders have refined all procedures for measuring the progress of pupils. Subject leaders now make regular checks to ensure that pupils' progress is fully recorded, tracked, and evaluated. On entry to school in the Early Years Foundation Stage or later, pupils' standards are well below average. Staff skilfully and meticulously set individual targets, matching these to each pupil's particular needs. Meeting their targets is a real spur to pupils' self-esteem and confidence. It enables each of them to thrive and to revel in their success.

Teaching is outstanding. There is excellent planning of activities by teachers within a well-balanced, creative and relevant curriculum. Teachers work closely with teaching assistants, therapists and other support staff to provide an exciting and challenging environment for all pupils. All staff pay close attention to the complex needs of pupils, especially by using intensive communication and sensory support systems. As a result, pupils in all groups make very significant progress although standards remain low because of the pupils' difficulties. However, staff have to work exceptionally hard to ensure that students in the sixth form are not disadvantaged by the weaknesses in accommodation for leisure and recreational activities. The school has identified these shortcomings in facilities in the school development plan.

There is an exceptional commitment by staff to provide a high standard of support to the pastoral care and welfare needs of pupils. Staff provide a safe and secure environment. They collaborate well and liaise closely with a range of external agencies and professionals to meet pupils' complex health needs. Safeguarding procedures and risk assessments are of the highest standard.

Achievement across the school is outstanding. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle into school well and make excellent progress. School data show clearly that pupils in the primary department by Year 6 benefit from the introduction of strategies such as the 'Catch-up Reading Scheme' to produce improvements seen in their reading skills. Pupils often make exceptional progress against the targets set for them, especially in literacy, mathematics and in their social and personal development. By the end of the secondary department, pupils in

Year 11 make excellent progress in English, mathematics and science. They have very good success in the Basic Skills Award scheme and Transition Challenge awards. Students in the sixth form achieve extremely well.

The sensory support department plays a pivotal and successful role in the school and is outstanding provision. Highly qualified and experienced staff for the visually and hearing impaired give pupils expert support on a regular basis in the extremely well equipped specialist rooms. They also work in close conjunction with class and subject teachers in the classroom. They develop specific programmes and use a variety of technologies and programmes such as Picture Communication Symbols to assist pupils to have greater access to learning. There is a highly effective communication programme in place across the school that has a multi-sensory approach and includes the teaching of Braille. The coordination of this aspect by the head of department is exemplary and contributes successfully to the school's excellent ability to be able to identify specific needs and offer individual support. There is excellent inclusion between sensory and non-sensory groups of pupils. In this way pupil diversity is celebrated across the school. This is evident, for example, through preparations for the school's Spring Fayre, which involves all pupils.

It is not surprising therefore, that personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils say how happy they are and how much they enjoy all the activities. They say they feel secure and well supported in school. They feel confident to participate in a range of activities both in and outside school that further boost their feelings of self-worth and personal achievement. For example, pupils recently joined others from neighbouring schools in an anti-bullying campaign. They take part in helping others through the Sports Leaders Award programme and test their own resilience and self-reliance on field trips such as the Keilder Challenge. Although pupils are provided with many good opportunities to mix with pupils from different backgrounds, faiths and cultures, the school has plans to extend these still further.

Pupil's enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance. For a small minority of pupils their complex medical needs mean that sometimes absences from school are unavoidable. However, school records show that it does not affect the overall excellent achievements of those pupils due to their absolute determination to overcome adversity and to succeed. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are polite and friendly towards one another, staff and visitors. Pupils make good ambassadors for the school in the many joint activities with pupils from other schools and within their local school community. As a result, members of the community hold the school and its pupils and students in the highest regard. Pupils' achievements, social skills and interactions are enhanced further through activities such as participation in work related learning, college link courses, and enterprise activities.

A teaching assistant, with the support of other staff, coordinates very successfully the clubs and various leisure and sporting activities of the extended school. These enable pupils to participate successfully and enjoy recreational and leisure activities that might otherwise be inaccessible to them. These include daily lunchtime clubs such as basketball, table cricket, drumming, as well as regular monthly after-school and Saturday clubs and a youth club. These are extremely popular with pupils who have a free choice of what they attend. Pupils who are trained as sports leaders give help to others.

The staff team has empowered pupils and students to express their views through consultation exercises and through a strong school council. They take account of the views that pupils and students hold when making key changes and decisions in school life. Similarly, parents are encouraged in many ways as active participants in supporting their child's learning and

achievements. The leadership sought parents and pupils' views during the successful campaign to improve the quality of school meals. They have raised the awareness amongst pupils about nutrition and healthy eating and the need for regular exercise in school. This has been further helped through the school's involvement in the School Food Trust national pilot on nutritional standards in schools. The school leadership has addressed the issue of school meals and the quality of these is now satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

There has been significant improvement in the leadership of the sixth form since the last inspection and this is now outstanding. There is an outstanding curriculum. This offers a range of very well directed and relevant activities that are very popular with students. As a result, student achievements are outstanding. Students make excellent progress and gain grades in GCSE, Entry Level, and passes in the Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Towards Independence Bronze Award and the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver Awards. They achieve success in the Trident activities that help to make them confident in the use of public transport. They are included in all elements of school but also have opportunities to mix with students from local high schools and colleges of further education. This widens their social horizons. Staff liaise closely with parents, external agencies, and other professionals so that students can make a successful transition to further education placements. Staff have to work hard to overcome some weaker features in the facilities to ensure that students' achievements are not adversely affected. For example, there is limited space for student social interaction and recreation.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children are taught very effectively alongside pupils in Key Stage 1 who follow a similar developmental curriculum. The leader of the primary department provides excellent management of this area and consequently provision is outstanding. This is evident through the close links maintained with parents and with pre-school key workers from external agencies. Staff make detailed assessments to make sure that children's social and learning needs are recognised and met. Children settle into the school very quickly and make excellent progress from very low levels of attainment on entry to the school. Staffing levels are high and individual timetables for each child ensure that they are able to learn at their own pace. However, they are fully included in all activities available to the rest of the group.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve facilities for students in the sixth form, as identified in the school development plan, and highlighted in this report.

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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 | 16-19 |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|

Overall effectiveness

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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|---|---|--|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 1 | |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 1 | |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 1 | |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 1 | |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 1 | |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 1 | |

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|---|
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 | 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 | |
| The extent to which 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 learners' needs? | 1 | 1 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 | 1 |

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 1 | 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 | 1 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 1 | |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 2 | |
| 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 | 1 | |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No | |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No | |

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 March 2009

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of the Clare School, Norwich NR4 7AU

Thank you for making us feel very welcome when we visited your school recently. It was good to be able to talk to you and hear your views about your school.

We were pleased to see how happy you are in school. You clearly enjoy the many interesting things that there are to do. We think that your school is a very friendly place. You all work very hard. The staff give you lots of help and take great care of you. As a result, you make excellent progress in all that you do. We particularly like the way that you help one another. We think it good that you visit other schools and colleges. You also help your school and other pupils by your work on the School Council and as sports leaders.

We think that your headteacher and all the staff do an excellent job. They make sure that you have everything you need. They make you feel safe and secure in school. They ensure that there are exciting things for you to do. We have noticed that there have been improvements to the school meals to make them more enjoyable and to keep you healthy. Teachers check all the things that you do well and help you make the next steps in your learning.

The staff work very hard to make the school better for you. However, we think that you should have better facilities in the sixth form rooms so that you can relax and enjoy the times when you are not working.

All the best for the future,

Yours sincerely

Ian Naylor

Lead inspector