

St Clare's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113046
Local Authority	Derby City
Inspection number	338077
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Giacobbe
Headteacher	Mrs Carmel McKenna
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 19 lessons and 11 teachers. Meetings were held with parents, groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of the school's documentation including development planning, monitoring information and safeguarding procedures. They also looked at 28 parents' questionnaires and a large number of staff and pupil questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement and progress of all pupils from their starting points, whether standards are different in KS3 and KS4 and whether the school can demonstrate that all pupils are reaching their potential
- how well assessment procedures translate into effective planning and target setting
- how the school can show clearly that outcomes for pupils are outstanding
- how effectively leaders and governors monitor and evaluate strategies to improve on the school's performance.

Information about the school

This averaged sized special school provides for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and for students with a range of additional learning needs including behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, autism and severe learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most students are White British. A minority of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status. Since the previous inspection more pupils are entering the school with additional needs, including a minority of pupils with a history of poor attendance and sometimes challenging behaviour.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

St Clare's is an outstanding school which has significantly improved its provision and consequently the achievement of pupils since the previous inspection. The areas for development indicated in the previous inspection report have been convincingly improved. The developments are the result of outstanding leadership and management by the headteacher. She has established a strong senior team which shares her determination to continually raise standards to ensure every pupil gets the best deal they can. The headteacher and her team support, coach and monitor staff rigorously to maintain and build on the very high quality of provision in every part of the school's work. Records of the pupils' progress are very detailed and comprehensive. The school is supported and held to account by an active and increasingly well-informed governing body. Currently the very experienced chair and a few other long standing members provide the driving force, to enable the new governors become more experienced. Pupils love being at school and this is reflected in their generally low absence rates and by their exemplary conduct. This represents a substantial improvement for those with a history of poor attendance and challenging behaviour, in their attitudes to school and learning. Pupils report that they feel very safe, relaxed and well supported within the welcoming environment.

Given the nature and complexity of their special educational needs, it is inappropriate to judge pupils' attainment against national norms. As a result of the very high quality of teaching and the outstanding care and support, they achieve highly and make excellent progress in their personal development, particularly in their ability to work in collaboration and to socialise happily with other pupils. All the pupils make at least good progress and many do outstandingly well. As a result, by the time they leave almost all pupils gain a range of nationally accredited qualifications including GCSE art. The school is a vibrant cohesive community. Pupils gain a good understanding of their own and the wider community and that of other nations.

Teachers know their pupils very well. They observe and assess pupils' progress in great detail and they provide activities which challenge each individual to learn as fast as possible. Teachers have extremely high expectations of their pupils' achievement and behaviour that pupils routinely meet. The curriculum is outstanding because it is so well adapted to the learning needs and abilities of each pupil. Teachers plan consistently interesting lessons to which the pupils respond very well. The important themes of knowing how to keep safe, healthy and to develop understanding of the community, including work related skills are threaded skilfully through each subject of the curriculum. Teachers creatively and effectively use information and communication technology (ICT) to motivate pupils and to add to their understanding. This was an area

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identified for improvement in the previous inspection and which has been significantly developed. Learning is enhanced by the wide range of further sporting and creative activities such as in drama, dance and art.

The school evaluates its own work very critically, through careful monitoring of all aspects of its work. It uses the outcomes of this extremely well to identify key priorities to improve further. There is an excellent track record of success over recent years and the school has an outstanding capacity to sustain this record of improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Support and develop the skills of the relatively new governors to ensure the whole governing body is able to give a high level of informed challenge and support to the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

All the pupils make significant and consistent progress. Pupils make excellent progress in literacy and numeracy throughout the school because of skilled teaching. By the time they leave the school, almost all pupils have gained GCSE art and a range of Entry Level and other vocational qualifications which enable them to go on confidently to further education courses. Those pupils with additional special educational needs are very well supported and also make outstanding progress. The pupils with reading and spelling weaknesses, for instance, make excellent progress through focused precision teaching. Those with autism are helped to overcome their communication difficulties by sensitive teaching which focuses on the development of communication and social interaction skills, through the use of visual aids. The school's data and inspectors' observation in lessons demonstrate securely that pupils with additional learning needs are making equally good progress as other pupils. In an outstanding Year 8 science lesson, for example, all the pupils, gained a clear understanding of the role of carbohydrate in creating energy, through the teacher's clear explanation and the targeted support provided to pupils with more complex needs.

Excellent progress in behaviour is reflected in pupils' rapid increase in confidence and strong motivation to succeed in learning. This ethos of hard work and mature behaviour throughout the school has a hugely positive impact on the pupils' progress. This was demonstrated in an excellent Year 10 outdoors physical education lesson where the pupils worked enthusiastically together, collaborating extremely well, in map reading and finding the various locations in the school grounds.

Pupils quickly develop and maintain positive attitudes to their work and greatly enjoy their learning because of the support and encouragement of their teachers. They feel very well cared for by staff and are confident that any problems they have will be sorted out. Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is excellent. They demonstrate high levels of empathy, tolerance and understanding. Consequently, all the pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, learn and socialise harmoniously. Students are knowledgeable about their own community and culture as

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well as that of others in the United Kingdom and abroad. They are in contact with French children and have supported schoolchildren in Africa. They know through many visits, about different places of worship and multi ethnic venues. They appreciate a range of foods in school, such as Chinese and Italian; they see visitors in a range of national dress and they learn to understand and appreciate the culture of different people throughout the world.

The school has gained national recognition for its work in encouraging the pupils' to adopt healthy lifestyles and is currently seeking advanced Healthy Schools' status. The pupils understand many of the factors which affect their health, such as the impact of smoking and drugs, and they are keen to take part in activities to improve their well-being. There is a very good take up of the sporting and creative opportunities offered in lunchtime clubs. Outstanding progress in basic skills, above average attendance and their excellent vocational preparation, through for example the development of independence skills and successful work related learning, gives pupils an effective springboard as they leave for further education or training.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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How effective is the provision?

Teaching is outstanding because the pupils are skilfully helped to do the best they can. The teachers combine extremely effective behaviour management strategies with very positive promotion of the pupils' self-esteem and enjoyment. This has an excellent impact on the pupils' learning and behaviour. Lessons are very well planned and organised, and teachers use ICT very well to stimulate pupils' interest and understanding, and to support them in their writing. Well trained teaching assistants give a high level of individual support to all pupils, enabling them to be confident in attempting new work.

Teachers use assessment of pupils' work extremely effectively to ensure that they are all reaching challenging learning targets, to intervene quickly when a pupil is experiencing difficulty and to adapt the curriculum very successfully to pupils' learning needs. As a result pupils learning is extended in small steps and all the pupils make consistently outstanding progress. The pupils understand their own targets very well since they are regularly referred to. Teachers make excellent use of questions during lessons to check understanding. The pupils know clearly how to improve their work further. The pupils' enjoyment and the development of their personal skills are enhanced significantly through a very wide range of extra activities, including vocational accredited courses in horticulture, hair and beauty and construction skills. Learning is further enriched through the annual theatre production, outdoor adventurous activities at the Darley Barn centre and an annual residential trip for Year 11.

The outstanding care and support ensures pupils' individual pastoral and welfare needs are fully met and that their efforts are always valued. This is enhanced through very strong support for pupils and their families, tolerance and support for others, as well as their academic and personal achievement. Staff work very effectively with health professionals and therapists to give pupils as much help as possible to ensure that they make very good progress and develop as individuals. In turn, the pupils have excellent relationships with staff: they are very aware of the high standards of progress and behaviour which are expected of them, and they do their best to live up to these expectations.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leaders have been highly successful in embedding the ambition in all staff to do the very best for the pupils. Every aspect of the school is rigorously monitored and improved upon. For instance, teachers who are leaders of subjects, review other teachers' planning and assessment of pupils' work. They meet with colleagues to evaluate the success of schemes of work and a member of the senior team calls them to account twice each term. This in turn leads to precise action plans for the school's further development, which are scrutinised well by governors. As new governors become more experienced they are enabling the governing body to make a good contribution to the school's drive for improvement. The pupils' progress is continually monitored and speedy intervention made whenever necessary to support their learning. This ensures that every pupil has full equal access to high quality school experiences. As a result, the outcomes for all pupils are outstanding and therefore the school gives excellent value for money. The school's tracking procedures give leaders an excellent overview of the school's performance and provide very useful comparisons with the school's performance in relation to a range of similar schools. This aspect of the school's management has significantly developed since the previous inspection. Leaders have recognised the need to simplify and present the data more clearly to make it easily accessible to parents and governors.

Parents and carers are regarded as vital to their children's' progress, they are kept very well informed and seen as full partners in the pupils' education. Partnerships with other schools and colleges are outstanding. Consequently, the school is able to ensure that leavers enter a range of suitable and challenging vocational college courses. Since the previous inspection, there have been very few pupils who did not leave school for further education training or employment. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils are very robust and ensure that they are extremely safe. There is rigorous monitoring of any incidents, thorough assessment of potential risks and regularly updated high quality training, for instance in safe handling and restraint. Pupils develop a good understanding of their own community and of the diversity of cultures and religions of the United Kingdom as well as those in other countries. The school has audited its provision, constructed a relevant action plan and has evaluated its impact on pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are happy with all aspects of their children's school. They feel their children are getting an excellent education and that the school is very effective in meeting their child's needs. They are confident that their children are safe and happy. One parent commented, 'We are 100% happy with his education and care'. Inspectors endorse parents' positive views. A very small minority of parents felt that communication with the school could be improved. This is not borne out by the inspection evidence or the views of other parents. A parent stated, 'We are always kept informed with any relevant information.....care and learning at its best'.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Clare's School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 28 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 95 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	75	7	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	86	4	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	82	4	14	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	75	6	21	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	71	8	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	78	6	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	61	11	39	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	16	58	11	39	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	82	5	18	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	75	6	21	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	64	8	28	2	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	75	7	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	78	6	21	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



7 July 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of St Clare's School, Derby, DE3 9AZ

Not long ago we came to the school to see how you were getting on and whether we could suggest anything to make the school better. You made us very welcome and we enjoyed talking to you in your classrooms, at lunchtime and in a meeting. Thank you for telling us how you feel about the school, the other pupils and your lessons. We could see that you all really enjoy school. We were with you for two days. That was long enough for us to realise that you go to an outstanding school.

Here is a list of some of the things we particularly liked about your school:

- you work hard and make excellent progress in your learning and in your personal development
- your behaviour is excellent - congratulations!
- the many different people at the school look after you very well
- you do many interesting activities which you like and which make you want to learn better and faster
- all the adults work hard to give you as much help as possible and they are good at making sure the work they ask you to do is suitable for each of you
- your headteacher runs the school very well.

We think the school could improve even further if:

The new governors of the school, as they become more experienced, could then help you to learn even better.

All of you can help too by continuing to work hard and by supporting each other.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Blackband

Lead inspector

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