

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Clare School

South Park Avenue, Norwich, Norfolk NR4 7AU

Inspection dates:

5–6 November 2019

Outcome

The Clare School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Clare School is a magical place, filled with joy and happiness, fun and laughter. Every moment is filled with whatever is 'just right' for each pupil. Behaviour is excellent and bullying unheard of.

The school gives pupils a voice. Most pupils cannot speak verbally because of physical, sensory or other disabilities. Staff work tirelessly to find the best way to enable each pupil to communicate. For example, several pupils use 'eye-gaze' technology to interact with the world and make their thoughts known.

The school does not have a curriculum. It has 100 individual curriculums. The programme for each pupil is designed to meet their specific needs and interests. Leaders and staff have very high expectations of every pupil. Regardless of their disability, the school expects pupils to do as well as they possibly can.

Pupils' health, safety and welfare are given the highest priority. Many pupils have significant health needs that require constant medical attention. Staff are trained to provide whatever care pupils need. Even for the most poorly pupils, parents and carers are able to let their children go to school, secure in the knowledge that they will be cared for to the highest standard at all times.

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

School leaders use each pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan particularly well. They are the starting points for devising each individual curriculum. This means that the needs of each pupil are taken into account fully and nothing is missed. Targets are set for pupils that are challenging and aspirational. This helps them to be successful and to achieve. For example, swimming lessons are not just an opportunity for pupils to enjoy being in the water. Even the most physically disabled pupils are challenged to achieve more. They are given the support and guidance they need to develop their skills. So, for

example, pupils with very limited movement learn to float and to move themselves through the water.

Pupils follow one of three curriculum pathways, depending on their individual needs. Each individual learning programme is planned within the most appropriate pathway. For example, pupils with profound learning disabilities typically follow the pre-formal route. This concentrates on pupils learning very simple, basic skills. A key priority for pupils is to learn to express a preference for one thing over another. Pupils on the semi-formal pathway develop these skills further.

Pupils on the formal pathway learn about a full range of subjects. They learn English, mathematics, science and all the other subjects in the national curriculum. Older pupils follow accredited courses in subjects such as communication skills and art. This means that pupils leave school with recognised, externally assessed qualifications.

Pupils are given a wide range of opportunities. For example, the signing choir gives pupils the chance to perform in a group and to develop competence in expressive signing. Older pupils are given the chance to try out different places of work. Pupils do work experience placements, for example in a residential home for older people, in the local library and in a local theatre.

School staff are highly trained. Many of them have specialist qualifications. For example, the school has a team of staff who have completed high-level training in manual handling. This team carries out a thorough risk assessment for every pupil who uses a wheelchair. The team ensures that other staff are properly trained. They make sure that staff use the equipment that is best suited to each individual pupil. This makes it much safer when pupils are moved from place to place. It also means that pupils' dignity is maintained and that movements are as stress-free as possible for pupils.

Staff know their pupils exceptionally well. They are universally kind, caring and respectful with pupils. Staff are vigilant and notice the smallest changes in pupils' mood or behaviour. This helps them to understand pupils' wants and needs, where pupils are unable to easily make themselves understood.

Staff are resilient and patient. In many cases, pupils make progress in small steps over very long periods of time. Staff never lose their focus on what each pupil is aiming for. They continue to help pupils to make the progress that is right for them, no matter how long it takes. Their never-ending enthusiasm and optimism are a great strength of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding has a very high profile. Leaders understand the school's particular safeguarding risks exceptionally well. They ensure that staff understand these risks too. Staff understand that 'doing nothing is not an option'. They report all possible signs of abuse or neglect promptly. Leaders ensure that appropriate action is taken in response.

Leaders and governors do everything they can to ensure that only suitable people are allowed to work with pupils. Suitable safeguarding policies are in place. For example, the school's intimate care policy is followed at all times.

Background

When we have judged a special school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding 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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	121261
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10110321
Type of school	Special
School category	Community 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	98
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Linda Scase-Jones
Headteacher	Fyfe Johnston
Website	www.clare.norfolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 April 2016

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 and can remain there until they are 19 years old. Almost all pupils move on to local colleges when they leave the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, other leaders and staff, and a group of governors. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone.

- Inspectors checked the school’s single central record of pre-appointment checks, met the school’s designated safeguarding leads, spoke with staff and pupils, and checked the school’s child protection records.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors considered a range of school documents.
- Inspectors spoke to parents as they brought their children to school. Inspectors took account of 14 responses to Ofsted’s staff survey, 13 responses to Parent View and 13 free-text comments from parents.
- Inspectors looked in depth at the following subjects: reading, communication, physical development and creative arts. Inspectors met with the leaders of these subjects, visited lessons, looked at pupils’ work, spoke with pupils about their work, spoke to teachers and listened to pupils read.

Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Clare Fletcher

Ofsted Inspector

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