

Inspection of The Clere School

Earlstone Common, Burghclere, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 9HP

Inspection dates:	15 and 16 January 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Inadequate
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Too many pupils feel unsafe at school. Many told inspectors that they do not report bullying as they do not have confidence in the school's ability to deal with their concerns. When reported, allegations of bullying are often not recorded accurately. This means that the school does not monitor or follow up reported cases rigorously enough.

The school does not have high enough expectations of pupils' attendance. More than half of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils who are in receipt of free school meals are persistently absent from school. Pupils who attend well told inspectors that their learning is often disrupted by constant recapping for pupils who have high absence or by the poor behaviour of a small minority of pupils.

The school's expectations for pupils' academic achievement are high. However, the improvements that the school is making have not had sufficient impact to improve achievement. The combination of changes in leadership and high levels of staff absence means that, until recently, frequent incidents of poor behaviour across the school had not been addressed consistently. This is not the case now. In most lessons, pupils' learning is focused and undisturbed by disruption. Achievement is improving, albeit gradually.

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

Since the last inspection, frequent changes of staff have unsettled pupils and prevented the embedding of effective systems. Many pupils behave well. However, the behaviour of a small proportion of pupils is poor. In some lessons, a small number of pupils disturb learning, and their disruptive behaviour is not addressed effectively. In meetings with inspectors, pupils described how behaviour in some parts of the school makes them feel uncomfortable. Here, pupils told us that they regularly experience being pushed, for example, in corridors and the lunch queue. Bullying remains a worry for too many pupils. The processes for dealing with pupils' concerns do not align with the school's own policy. This means that some pupils' disrespectful behaviour goes unchallenged.

The proportion of pupils studying the full suite of English Baccalaureate subjects remains low. However, recent appointments have strengthened leadership significantly, particularly in some critical subject areas. Recent refinements to the curriculum are evident, although many are in their infancy. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. In English and mathematics, teachers present information clearly and ensure that pupils acquire knowledge and skills by carefully building on previous learning. This is not the case in other subjects, where teachers do not routinely ensure that pupils acquire new knowledge and skills as well as they could. Some teachers do not check pupils' learning effectively, so gaps in knowledge are not consistently identified or addressed.

The school monitors attendance closely and has used this analysis to help increase the attendance of a small number of individual pupils. However, strategies to improve overall attendance are not sufficiently rigorous. Too many pupils are persistently absent from school, particularly those who receive free school meals and pupils with SEND. The rate of

suspensions is very high, particularly for pupils with SEND. This means that these pupils miss too much school, and their learning suffers as a result.

The quality of support provided to pupils with SEND is improving slowly. Their needs are identified accurately. Recently updated pupil profiles give staff relevant information to help these pupils to learn well. However, some staff do not use this information effectively enough. Furthermore, pupils who receive free school meals do not receive the support in lessons that they need to achieve well. Their achievement is further hampered by their poor attendance at school.

Expert staff provide support for pupils who are behind in reading, particularly in Year 7, and this helps them catch up quickly. However, pupils in Years 8, 9 and 10 do not receive additional help to read with fluency and confidence. This means that some older pupils struggle to access the curriculum until, in Year 11, they receive the support that they need.

Provision for pupils' wider personal development is improving. A revised personal, social and health education programme provides timely and age-appropriate relationships and sex education. Pupils learn critical personal safety lessons, including about online safety. Many pupils relish the opportunities to take part in clubs, particularly sports teams. Pupils receive timely careers information, education, advice and guidance. However, there is more work to do to help pupils understand the importance and relevance of this information.

Governance has also improved. The school benefits from local authority support. Improved stability in leadership and staffing is ensuring that the school is starting to move in the right direction. Leaders remain positive and are equipped to make the changes necessary to improve the school. The school carefully considers the impact of improvements on staff workload. As a result, staff feel valued.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school protects pupils from risk of harm. Staff are well trained and vigilant. They understand the importance of reporting any concerns they may have to relevant trained staff. The culture of safeguarding is open and transparent. Expert staff manage child protection arrangements and refer cases to relevant outside agencies, when appropriate. However, the school's record-keeping is not as accurate as it should be. The school does not ensure that staff maintain precise and comprehensive records in accordance with the school's own policy. This means that, sometimes, information is held in multiple places or is not clear and, as a result, follow-up actions may be missed. The school does not have an accurate understanding of patterns or trends of worrying incidents or behaviours, such as the extent of bullying in the school. The school has not actively listened to the views of pupils who feel that bullying is not dealt with effectively. This means that many pupils told inspectors they do not feel safe at school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not acted swiftly enough to rectify the deficiencies in the school or make the necessary improvements to ensure that good standards are maintained. The school's own policies and improvement priorities are not applied rigorously or consistently enough to secure rapid and sustainable improvements. The school must focus its actions on those aspects that are most in need of improvement and rapidly rectify the shortcomings identified by this inspection.
- The school has not ensured that pupils have confidence in how the school addresses bullying. As a result, pupils often do not report incidents of bullying for fear that the school will not take effective action. The school must ensure that bullying concerns are taken seriously and dealt with effectively, so that pupils regain confidence in the school's anti-bullying policy.
- Many pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, are often absent from school. The number of pupils who are persistently absent remains worryingly high, particularly for pupils with SEND. The rate of suspensions is high and not reducing. Too many pupils, therefore, miss vital learning and are at risk of falling even further behind. The school must ensure that it takes robust action so that attendance improves rapidly, persistent absence decreases and the rate of suspensions reduces.
- The teaching of the curriculum is too variable. Furthermore, teachers' checks on pupils' learning do not enable them to know how well pupils learn the curriculum. Often gaps in knowledge or misconceptions go unaddressed. The school should ensure that teachers accurately identify gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge and then seek to tackle these in their subsequent teaching.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils, particularly those who receive free school meals, remains low. Staff do not adapt their teaching to meet the needs of pupils with SEND effectively enough. This means that disadvantaged pupils are not supported to build knowledge and skills consistently well and do not attain the qualifications that they need to progress to their next stages of education, training or employment. The school should ensure that pupils consistently achieve high standards, and that teachers know how to meet the needs of pupils with SEND effectively.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	116430
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10341460
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	470
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maureen Bax (co-chair) Garry Parker (co-chair)
Headteacher	Robin Milner
Website	www.clere.school
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher of the school took up their post in April 2023.
- There have been several other changes to leadership positions across the school since the previous inspection. The governing body has also undergone substantial change, with new co-chairs established by the local authority in November 2022 to strengthen oversight.
- The school uses one registered and three unregistered providers of alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and

management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and other curriculum leaders. The lead inspector met with representatives of the local governing body, including both co-chairs. She also scrutinised minutes of their meetings.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, design technology and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons in other subjects, spoke with teachers and pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils and observed their behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime.
- A wide range of the school's documentation was taken into consideration, including policies and the school's development plan.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with groups of staff and considered the opinions expressed through the online staff survey. Inspectors also took account of the views of parents and carers expressed through the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Linda Culling, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tash Hurtado

His Majesty's Inspector

Ann Fearon

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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