

Clare Mount Specialist Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105129
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	355704
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Terry McKenzie

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs B Dutton
Headteacher	Mrs Shirley Allen
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2007
School address	Fender Lane Moreton, Wirral Merseyside CH46 9PA
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Seventeen lessons taught by 16 teachers were seen and meetings were held with students, governors and staff. The inspectors observed the work of the college, looked at policies, improvement plans, teachers' records and the 59 questionnaires returned from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the college's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of teaching and assessment in enabling students to progress and gain accreditations.
- The impact of the curriculum on promoting students' future economic well-being and developing their basic skills.
- The ability of leaders to make changes and improvements.
- The effectiveness of managers in providing appropriate safeguarding and care for students.

Information about the school

Clare Mount Sports College provides for students with moderate learning difficulties, autistic spectrum conditions and severe learning difficulties. A significant minority have additional barriers to learning such as behavioural difficulties and all have a statement of special educational needs. Most are of White British heritage and the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is in line with the local average. Seventeen students are looked after by the local authority and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than the national average.

Since the last inspection, Clare Mount has appointed a new headteacher, maintained its specialist status as a sports college and gained a second specialism in cognition and learning. A greater number of students with autistic spectrum conditions have been admitted, thus changing the overall nature of the college. It provides extended services, notably to parents, carers and families and has gained the Sportsmark, Artsmark Gold, the Green Flag Award, a Quality Award for work experience and an award for Excellence in Careers and Guidance.

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

Clare Mount is an outstanding college and represents excellent value for money throughout, including in the sixth-form provision. Because of their learning difficulties students join the college with much lower than average attainment. However, through utilising its specialist expertise in cognition and learning the college ensures that students make good progress and achieve well. Many gain GCSEs and other qualifications and a few of these are at a standard comparable to those gained by students in mainstream schools. Students make remarkable gains in social skills and demonstrate outstanding behaviour. The positive relationships that they form with staff help students to feel very safe in college and encourage them to contribute extremely well to the college and wider community. Through the influence of the specialism in sports the college is highly effective in encouraging the adoption of healthy lifestyles. During work and leisure time students demonstrate extremely high social and moral standards. They gain knowledge about right and wrong and gather very high quality skills for moving on to the next stages of their lives.

Teaching is good but it does not always make full use of assessment information to plan suitably differentiated tasks to enable students to make the best possible progress in lessons. Nevertheless, progress is very well supported by the opportunities available to students through the outstanding curriculum. Students and parents and carers are highly appreciative of the exceptional care, guidance and support that they receive throughout students' time at Clare Mount. The outstanding support for students is further enhanced by the superb arrangements that exist with partners in the community that enable all in Key Stage 4 and post-16 students to undertake work experience and off-site education.

Senior leaders and the governing body demonstrate outstanding vision for Clare Mount's continuing success and development. They have already taken it through many successful changes, for example, by gaining a second specialism and successfully integrating the new group of students with autistic spectrum conditions. Self-evaluation is extremely effective so that leaders have a full understanding of the qualities of the college so that no students are disadvantaged and all have equal opportunities to achieve. Improvement planning is detailed and ensures that quality is maintained and enhanced. For example, the curriculum has recently been completely revised in Key Stage 3 and the already highly effective community cohesion strategies are regularly reviewed and enhanced. All this indicates clearly that the college has outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' progress, by September 2011, by ensuring that teachers better use assessment information to set clear, well-matched tasks for individuals in lessons and to identify longer-term targets for students.

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

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Achievement is good for all groups of students including those with autistic spectrum conditions. For some students in Key Stage 4 achievement is outstanding. For example, most gain GCSEs, some of which in art and design are at a level comparable to those expected in mainstream schools. Students are keen to learn. They settle quickly into independent studies in class and contribute well to group work. Many make good use of computers to aid their learning. Students make good progress in the use of numeracy, literacy and communication skills and in other areas of learning such as developing skills for independent living. Through feeling very safe students thoroughly enjoy college. They report that incidents of bullying and harassment are almost unknown and that they trust the adults to resolve any immediate difficulties. Students attend well and they engage effectively with learning. Enrichment activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, contribute to students' outstanding social and moral development. By learning about the world of work through the curriculum, work experience and off-site educational opportunities students enhance their prospects of moving on to higher education, training or employment. Thus, the promotion of their future economic well-being is outstanding.

Students are very polite and welcoming to visitors. They are highly supportive of each other through the school council, their lessons and during breaktimes and other gatherings. Their behaviour is exemplary. Students engage enthusiastically with the wide range of sporting activities and the constant focus on sport and fitness contributes to the high levels of participation in physical activity. The sports specialism is also successful in encouraging interaction with others in the community through sporting events and competitions. Thus, students come to know about other people outside of the college and this enhances their classroom learning about different societies and ways of life in this country and throughout the world.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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.

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall. Teachers know students well and tasks in most lessons are generally matched to students' abilities. However, teachers do not always make sufficient use of students' assessments to plan differentiated tasks and set clearly focussed lesson targets. Teaching assistants mostly guide students well, encouraging them to complete tasks. Thus students appreciate the very good working relationships in classrooms that help to ensure their high standards of behaviour and good levels of engagement. The exciting curriculum has improved significantly since the last inspection and is innovative in its nature. For younger students it is based firmly on the National Curriculum whilst providing many opportunities for it to be well-matched to students' needs and interests. This ensures that the different groups of students are extremely well provided for and have opportunities to learn and make progress. In Key Stage 4 there is a strong emphasis on the acquisition of qualifications and accreditations whilst older students in the post-16 department learn about and develop the important skills that will be of most value when they move on to the next stages of their lives. The curriculum provides significant enrichment linked to the sports specialism and most of the older students take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, both in and out of school time.

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The great strength of the college is the outstanding care guidance and support that is offered at every level. For example, great attention is paid to the transition arrangements that bring younger students into college and help the older students to move on to their next stages. Transitions are aided by the recent appointment of a local authority transition specialist to the governing body. Similarly, very careful arrangements are made for transport to and from home. The provision of personal, social and health education greatly enhances the healthy ethos of the school by providing for students' emotional well-being. For example, high quality discussions and strategies are used by teachers to help reduce students' stress levels and provide safe opportunities for them to air any issues of concern. In the event of any absence or lateness by students, parents and carers are immediately contacted to establish why students are not in college.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders have overseen greatly improved students' learning and progress since the last inspection. However, the senior team has not yet ensured that teachers always make the best use of the high quality assessment information available to them from the centralised system of reporting and recording of students' attainments. Nevertheless, through knowing the work of the college so well senior leaders are able to appraise its work accurately to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to succeed. For example, through employing the skills that merit its status as a specialist provision for cognition and learning the college ensures that the curriculum is very well adapted to meet the needs of the different groups of students. Furthermore, under the leadership of the headteacher a new group of students with a different range of learning difficulties has been successfully integrated and included in the college in the last two years. Leadership skills and ambition are very well disseminated throughout the college so that, for example, subject leaders have been instrumental in helping to develop the new areas of study in Key Stage 3.

Governance is outstanding through monitoring the work of the college and encouraging the headteacher and senior leaders to take on new challenges. Members of the governing body are highly aspirational for the college. They are active in appointing new and influential staff and other governors. This helps to ensure a broad range of skills and experience are available to the college.

Safeguarding procedures are good, with all requirements for safe recruitment and training met. Leaders and managers place great emphasis on Clare Mount's contributions to the local and wider community. The college works very hard to include all parents and carers

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through some well-considered extended services. For example, in addition to providing regular high-quality written information to students' homes the college encourages parents and carers to take part in coffee mornings and adult learning opportunities. The outstanding work undertaken to promote community cohesion is regularly reviewed and fully included in development planning. Students learn about maintaining good relations with others through sporting and other events such as visits to other communities. Thus they encounter and appreciate people from different religions, cultures and backgrounds.

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	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

The curriculum is organised so as to enable students to continue to gain qualifications from externally accredited courses whilst learning the skills of independence and self-sufficiency that are essential for moving on to the next stages of their lives. A valuable part of students' learning takes place outside of the college in other educational provisions and through work experience. Students make good progress academically, in line with the quality of teaching, and outstanding progress in their personal development. For example, there is an increasing sense of responsibility and a growing awareness of what is required to secure options for the future such as employment and further training. Students continue from earlier studies in the college, to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. They begin to apply their learning to real life situations such as filling-in work logs as part of their work experience. They handle money and make good use of computers in the classroom so that these technical skills can be transferred to the workplace.

All students learn the essentials of independent travel. Many make their own way to college using public transport and this is a great step forward for them. Training includes valuable instruction on how to travel safely and how to recognise the risks that come with increasing independence. Clare Mount recognises that some students are highly vulnerable

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and dependent on significant levels of support and guidance. However, as part of their overall outstanding practice the leaders and managers of the sixth form successfully involve parents and carers in the support processes and they greatly appreciate this.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Questionnaires were returned from 59 parents and carers and this is a slightly below average response in a school of this size and nature. Respondents mainly reflected the inspectors' conclusions and were overwhelmingly positive about the college. For example, one typical written comment was, 'My child has come on in leaps and bounds since starting at the college – it couldn't be a better place.'

A very few parents and carers expressed concern about the quality of care, guidance and support that their children receive. While the inspectors agree that there is always more that can be done in this respect the inspection evidence indicated that the care, guidance and support provided is outstanding.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Clare Mount Specialist Sports College 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 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 205 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	68	19	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	47	80	12	20	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	33	56	24	41	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	54	22	37	4	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	64	19	32	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	56	22	37	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	53	26	44	2	3	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)	34	58	23	39	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	58	22	37	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	49	29	49	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	42	31	53	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	58	23	39	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	64	18	31	1	2	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 all 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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 pupils' 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.



15 October 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Clare Mount Specialist Sports College, Wirral CH46 9PA

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we visited your college recently. We enjoyed meeting you on the playground, at lunch and in your classes. Clare Mount is an outstanding college and the adults look after you very well indeed. We know that you feel very safe and secure at college and appreciate the excellent relationships that you develop with each other and with staff. Your contributions are outstanding because you behave very well and try very hard to adopt healthy lifestyles. Your attendance is good and you are keen to learn about others and get on with them both inside college and in other places.

Your teachers produce good lessons from an outstanding curriculum. This helps you to gain well from GCSE and other courses that are provided. The headteacher, other senior leaders and the governors all work very hard to provide for you. You have many exciting opportunities outside of college, particularly in the post-16 department. Clare Mount communicates very well with your parents and carers and encourages them and other partners to ensure that you get the best from your education.

The inspectors feel that some improvements could still be made. We have asked the teachers to make sure the work they set for each of you is just hard enough. This will help you to make even more progress.

We wish you all the best for the future and once again thank you for your help and interest in the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Terry McKenzie

Lead inspector

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