

Inspection of an outstanding school: Clare Mount Specialist Sports College

Fender Lane, Moreton, Wirral, Merseyside CH46 9PA

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 November 2021

Outcome

Clare Mount Specialist Sports College continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils achieve well at this highly ambitious school. They feel happy and safe in school. Skilled staff ensure that pupils' varying special educational needs and/or disabilities are appropriately catered for. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and supportive.

Leaders set very high expectations for pupils' achievement and behaviour. Staff model these expectations well. As a result, pupils behave very well in lessons and at social times. They are polite and proud of their achievements. Pupils know what bullying is but said that it is very rare. If it was to happen, pupils said that teachers would sort issues out quickly.

Pupils experience many engaging and beneficial opportunities in and out of school. These include visits to the theatre, participation in sports tournaments and access to a wide range of clubs. Pupils enjoy taking part in residential visits that develop their independence. Students in the sixth form develop their social skills in a range of ways. This includes them working in the on-site community café.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. A typical comment was: 'The dedicated staff at this school provide a happy learning environment where my child thrives.'

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

Leaders have established an ambitious and engaging curriculum. This meets the individual needs of pupils very well, including those who are disadvantaged. Leaders and staff focus on getting to know pupils quickly when they start at the school. Leaders' mantra is 'safe and settled'. Pupils have their sensory needs met very well, for example, by dancing to music on the playground or burning off excess energy in the gym. This approach ensures that pupils are ready to learn.

Leaders' curriculum plans clearly show what knowledge pupils should learn and when they should learn it. This knowledge builds in a logical way. Teachers personalise curriculum plans to account for pupils' specific learning needs. For example, in English and drama, pupils read abridged versions of Shakespeare and perform plays. This means that they know the stories in great detail by the time they reach Year 11.

Teachers have a strong subject knowledge. They also identify pupils' needs effectively. This enables teachers to deliver the curriculum well. Teachers set tasks that develop communication skills while encouraging pupils to do their best. For example, in art and design, pupils record videos explaining their choice of techniques to their peers.

Leaders and teachers regularly check pupils' learning. Teachers use this information to adapt their plans so that pupils revisit missed or forgotten learning often. As a result, pupils develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life beyond Clare Mount.

Leaders have ensured that developing pupils' reading and communication skills are key priorities. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, continue to build their phonics knowledge for as long as necessary. Teachers share a wide range of highly engaging texts with pupils. The vast majority of pupils develop effective reading and communication skills. Many become confident, fluent readers.

Leaders take the time to understand pupils' aspirations. Pupils' views are at the heart of leaders' decision-making. Leaders have introduced new subjects to ensure pupils receive a very broad curriculum. A wide range of academic and vocational pathways are available. These are well matched to pupils' needs and future ambitions.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They move around the school in a calm way. Pupils understand the consistent rules, rewards and sanctions. Well-trained senior leaders and members of the behaviour team provide specific support to pupils who need it.

Leaders have established an impressive preparation for adulthood curriculum. Students in the sixth form receive carefully planned work experience opportunities. They meet many potential employers and receive excellent careers advice and guidance. They are very well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training.

Leaders ensure that pupils understand the world beyond Clare Mount. For example, pupils delivered a remarkable assembly about Armistice Day. This widened their understanding of loyalty and sacrifice. Pupils learn about democracy and the importance of accepting people with different needs and beliefs. They deepen this knowledge when they elect their school councillors.

All staff who responded to the staff survey said that they are happy to work at the school. Staff said that leaders are sensitive to their workload and well-being. Staff appreciate the approachable and supportive senior leadership team.

Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Despite the many strengths of the school, leaders are driven to continually improve. The dedicated

headteacher and senior leadership team are highly committed to ensuring that all pupils succeed in life.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The close working relationship between leaders, staff, pupils and parents is strong. Staff know pupils extremely well. This means that they spot any changes in pupils' behaviour or other concerns quickly. Learning mentors provide pupils and their parents with effective support and guidance. When required, leaders work very closely with a range of agencies. This ensures pupils and their families get the help that they need.

Pupils learn how to stay safe. Pupils learn how to cycle safely and how to report concerns they encounter when working and playing online. They also learn about puberty and healthy relationships.

Background

When we have judged a 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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in October 2010.

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.

If you are the school and 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	105129
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10199805
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	248
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Breda Dutton
Headteacher	Kim Webster
Website	www.claremountssc.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 June 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides for pupils with moderate and specific learning difficulties. Many pupils have autistic spectrum disorder. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Since the previous inspection, the sixth form now operates from an independent site within walking distance of the main school.
- Due to the increased numbers of pupils at the school since the last inspection, several new staff have been appointed.
- The governing body is responsible for before-school provision at the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: English, science and design and technology. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke to teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors also considered other subjects, including physical education, geography, mathematics, history, art and design, and personal, social and health education. They met with subject leaders, reviewed pupils' work and evaluated curriculum plans.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation. The lead inspector spoke to the headteacher and senior leaders throughout the inspection. An inspector also met with the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with six members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He spoke on the telephone to representatives of the local authority, including the headteacher of the virtual school. The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone to the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding and scrutinised the single central record. They considered leaders' safeguarding processes and questioned staff's understanding of these procedures. Inspectors observed pupils during playtimes, lunchtimes and at the breakfast club. They discussed safeguarding with pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Adam Sproston, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Nell Banfield

Ofsted Inspector

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