

Clare Mount School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105129
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	301473
Inspection dates	13–14 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Sue Hunt

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
Number on roll	
School	216
6th form	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs B Moores
Headteacher	Mrs J Wylde
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2003
School address	Fender Lane Moreton Wirral Merseyside CH46 9PA
Telephone number	0151 6069440
Fax number	0151 6785476

Age group	11-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Clare Mount is a specialist sports college for students with moderate learning difficulties. A small number have additional learning difficulties and disabilities. The profile of special educational needs is more complex than at the time of the last inspection. Clare Mount is larger than the average special school. Approximately two - thirds of students are eligible for free school meals, while just below 10% are in the care of a local authority. Most students are of White British origin. A small minority have English as an additional language. Because of their special educational needs the attainment of the vast majority of students when they enter the college is well below that of students of the same age nationally.

The college has Sportsmark and Artsmark status, an enhanced Healthy Schools Award, awards for careers education and guidance and for horticulture. It has also gained awards for its work with international schools and work-related education. Two years ago it was granted Sports College status.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding sports college. 'If I had a million pounds I could not send my son to a better school' and 'she just loves coming to school' are typical of the comments received from parents summing up their satisfaction with the college. Through its clear strategic vision the excellent senior leadership team has improved the quality of provision since the college was last inspected. This high quality leadership underpins students' outstanding academic and personal development. However, some middle managers, when they take up new leadership roles are not always sufficiently prepared or conversant with the college's strategies for improvement. Students achieve extremely well by gaining passes in a wide range of examined courses. They thoroughly enjoy the excellent facilities made available to them, including those through the college's specialism. This is characterised by their high levels of attendance, their excellent behaviour and in the very caring relationships they form with each other and the staff. Students of all abilities care about each other and show great pleasure when their peers succeed. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding and is well promoted by the assemblies and daily form periods with their peers. The extensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is a strong feature of the curriculum and provides access to a range of relevant activities to suit the needs of all ages and abilities.

Students have a very clear awareness of the need to keep themselves safe and healthy and many enjoy a nutritious hot meal or healthy salad at lunchtime. The active college council is instrumental in bringing about significant improvements, including designing the kit for physical education (PE) and the playground activities for use during breaks. Students of all ages have regular contact with their peers in local schools and are involved in a wide range of activities with them in lessons, at lunchtimes and in areas of learning such as horticulture. Together with their work experience and college placements in Year 11 and the sixth form, these activities prepare them exceptionally well for transition to adult life.

Students benefit from excellent care, guidance and support. The college has robust policies and procedures for safeguarding its students. Support for parents is outstanding and highly valued by them, including the parents in the Parent Partnership who benefit from the sessions held for them on basic skills, computer skills and cookery. The college is very well placed to move forward and provides excellent value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Students make outstanding progress academically and socially. There is strong teaching with a wide range of activities. Students have access to regular work experience, college links and a wide range of accredited courses. This helps promote their outstanding personal development. Students receive the guidance and support they need and are very well prepared for adult life. However, the common room is not large enough for all the sixth formers to gather together and socialise and this restricts the opportunities for students to further enhance their social skills. Leadership of the sixth form is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Seek ways to improve the social accommodation for Post -16 students.
- Ensure that managers new to their posts have a secure knowledge of how they can contribute to the improvement of the college.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students of all abilities make excellent progress from the time they enter the college and this continues consistently throughout their stay. They achieve particularly well in all forms of PE and drama. Some students reach high standards in individual activities as a result of the support they are given. Older students, in Key Stages 4 and 5, achieve very well in a wide range of accredited courses. These have been well developed as the college profile has changed. The more able students succeed extremely well at GCSE. In 2007 targets were exceeded, with no fewer than five more-able students achieving five passes. Students in the care of the local authority and those whose English is a second language achieve as highly as others because of the very effective support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students are very positive about the college and very eager to learn. Their behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the college, including at breaks and lunchtimes. Students of all abilities are attentive in lessons and they clearly enjoy coming to college, as shown by their punctuality and attendance. Students adopt safe and healthy lifestyles. This is evident in PE lessons and the choices they make in the dining room. They have a powerful voice through the active college council and this helps make the college a better place for them to be in. They are particularly proud of designing the PE kit and choosing the colour schemes for the decoration of the college. Students attend their annual review meetings and are active in setting their own challenging targets. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Some of the older students take responsibility for the younger students, for example when choosing reading books. Students have an awareness of cultural diversity and there is a strong code of behaviour supported by a comprehensive reward system. Students feel safe and they know who to go to if they feel troubled about anything.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teachers plan activities that precisely match the individual needs of all students and to cater for the range of abilities, learning difficulties and personalities. Lessons focus on developing students' practical skills by involving them fully and by supporting them by skilled use of resources. Teachers and support staff work well together and are excellent role models. Lessons are lively and interesting and hold students' attention throughout. The marking of students' work is informative and encouraging and steers them in the right direction to achieve their best. All staff receive effective training in order to meet the specific needs of students, some of whom exhibit increasingly complex learning difficulties. In outstanding lessons staff are very well prepared, learning is active and artefacts, roleplay and computers are skilfully used to

motivate students. Students are taught how to evaluate their own progress and the progress made by their classmates and this helps them progress further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It is flexible and is tailored to meet the specific learning and social needs of individual students. Individual students have their own challenging targets to reach in literacy and numeracy, as well as targets for their class to reach. These are taken seriously and contribute to the excellent progress they make. Every student has an individual educational plan which is helpful in setting out these targets clearly, and all students are encouraged by staff to achieve their best in everything they do.

There is a high quality extensive range of activities, particularly for the visual and performing arts. This college specialism permeates the curriculum with visiting artists, performances and theme days. There are many links with the local community through, for example, the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme (Bronze and Silver) and work in the horticultural and travel sectors. Comprehensive citizenship programmes are in place alongside provision for PSHE. There is open access for all students to extra-curricular activities including Judo, French and computer clubs. The quality and range of visits and outings are exceptional. There are, for example, trips to France for all students and an outdoor activities residential experience for all students in Year 9. The sports specialism is having a huge impact on students' learning and achievements through raising their self-esteem and confidence.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

There is an excellent partnership between educational and health professionals who work together to help all the students succeed. This is an inclusive community and students who have additional learning needs have access to all resources and join in with everything. Support for individuals is innovative and creative and this increases students' self-esteem and confidence as when, for example, working out their own fitness programme as part of the independent travel programme. Safeguarding procedures are in place and meet current requirements. Risk assessments for activities are detailed and thorough. Students feel safe and well cared for, including in the playground. Students' progress is tracked effectively and underpins their outstanding achievement. Induction and transition arrangements for students are excellent. Parents and carers greatly appreciate the care, guidance and support their children receive. They value greatly the high quality of work placements, the range and levels of academic and other accreditation and the extensive vocational experiences.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The college leadership sets a very clear direction for improvement. It has successfully led the college so that the college has adapted to change and developed well since the last inspection.

The acting headteacher has initiated major changes and improvements over the past year and has taken advantage of the schools' Sports College status to improve the academic progress of all students as well as developing links with parents and the local community. The commitment of all staff has led to an ethos in which students thrive. There is a successful drive to improve links with other schools, colleges and services, to the benefit of all. The performance of all staff is monitored to evaluate and improve provision. The leadership team has accurately identified the key priorities to develop in the future. Some middle managers are less certain. When they move into new roles they do not all have a clear understanding of how they can influence further improvements. Governors support the college and carry out their responsibilities very effectively and act as critical friends. Having maintained high quality provision in changing circumstances, and having a very clear sense of direction for the future, the college is in an excellent position to make further improvements.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Clare Mount Sports College, Fender Lane, Moreton, CH46 9PA

On behalf of the inspection team thank you for your help and friendliness when we inspected your college recently. It was a delight to meet you all and to see how proud you are of your college.

We found many outstanding things about your college. You make excellent progress. Your behaviour is outstanding and you are very polite and confident. The quality of teaching is outstanding and your teachers and their assistants make your lessons interesting because they plan them with great care.

The range of subjects you follow is outstanding and is flexible and tailored to meet all your needs. You have a wide range of activities in which to take part and opportunities to take examinations. We have asked the headteacher and the staff to do two things to help make things better.

- Find ways of to improve the accommodation for Post-16 students so that they can all mix together during breaks and lunchtimes. You can help by taking your ideas to your teachers about how you would use a better social space.
- Make sure that teachers new to their management roles are better prepared for them and have a greater awareness of how they can help improve things for you.

We are confident your college will move from strength to strength and wish you every success