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<b>Policy:</b>	<b>Admissions</b>
<b>Policy Ref:</b>	<b>CM69</b>
<b>Review Date:</b>	<b>December 2025</b>
<b>Next Review:</b>	<b>December 2027</b>
<b>Authorised by:</b>	<b>Headteacher &amp; Chair of Governors</b>

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## **Rationale**

We believe this policy should be a working document that is fit for purpose, represents the school ethos and enables consistent response to the requests for placements.

This policy sets out the principles of admissions to Clare Mount Specialist Sports College and specifies the usual protocol for admissions.

To ensure equality of opportunity and access to quality educational provision, all students' admissions will be treated fairly.

Clare Mount Specialist Sports College is a co-educational day special school, funded by the LA for students mainly with a primary need of Autism (ASC) and Moderate Learning Difficulties.

All students have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The admission process starts with the Local Authority consultation being received by the school and school feeds back whether the school can meet the student's SEND or not. Our starting point is always whether the child has an EHCP, or a primary need of ASC/MLD. Other schools and bases are better trained and equipped to deal with SEMH needs and we strongly consider whether any behavioural needs are compatible with the anxieties and learning needs of our wider school population. The final decision about whether a student receives a place at Clare Mount Specialist Sports College lies with the Local Authority SEN team.

The Wirral Local Authority is the "admitting authority". Further information can be found on their website at: [www.wirral.gov.uk](http://www.wirral.gov.uk)

## **Aims of this policy:**

- To establish and maintain a fair and open admissions policy.
- To ensure compliance with all relevant legislation connected to this policy.
- To work with other schools and the local authority to share good practice around inclusive education in order to improve this policy.
- Consideration for the current educational and SEND landscape and Government direction of travel (see below):

The 2026 school White paper will set out "a system that is ambitious for every child, inclusive by design, and grounded in what works. A system where mainstream schools are better equipped to meet a wider range of needs; where children who are struggling get timely help; where children who are ready for more are stretched and challenged; and where enrichment

is an entitlement, not a luxury. A system where schools sit at the heart of their communities and support children beyond the classroom” – Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education, DfE, January 2026.

In light of the above, Clare Mount is committed to working with other schools to develop inclusive practice, promote the recommendations of the ISOS Partnership (see ISOS Partnership Report Executive Summary) and offer training to others to boost staff expertise and parent confidence.

### **Context: Admissions Policy and Eligibility Criteria**

Clare Mount Specialist Sports College is an over-subscribed Special School for children aged 11 to 19 years who have **special educational needs** and an **EHCP**. The school is based in one of the most deprived wards of Wirral.

Our cohort is made up of children whose **primary need is autism** (74% ASC). A small number of classes are also offered to pupils with a **primary need of Moderate Learning Difficulties** (MLD), who we historically catered for.

Our ASC students need small class sizes, lots of sensory spaces and movement breaks to calm themselves and self-regulate in order to access our curriculum. We promote ‘de-escalation,’ encouraging students to retreat to a safe space until they are ready to communicate. As a Beacon school, our approach is in keeping with guidance from the DfE, National Autistic Society and the Youth Sport Trust. Many of our current students are highly vulnerable and unable to cope with any verbal and physical aggression towards them when others are dysregulated. **Consequently, our school is not a suitable setting for young people whose primary need is SEMH or SLD.** The placement in Clare Mount of students with these primary needs is incompatible with the efficient education of our other students. Other schools in Wirral are better equipped to meet these primary needs.

It is absolutely vital for both the wellbeing of our students and to maximise the likelihood of expected academic and personal development that we create a safe, nurturing and barrier-free environment and culture for them. Our MLD students largely have CAT scores below 70. Data analysis shows that over the last few years 50% of our school population have only been at the end of KS1 academically upon entering school.

The school does not admit students where needs can be appropriately met within a mainstream setting with support or where a student’s profile of need extends beyond the scope of the school’s provision. As well as other factors mentioned above, these pupils simply would not have an appropriate peer group for learning or socially. This is in keeping with the commitment of the current Government who wants to “support the sector to ensure a high-quality offer of bases in mainstream settings” for pupils who have had a mainstream primary education (Georgia Gold, Minister for School Standards, DfE, National Conversation on the Future of SEND, December 2025). Wirral Local Authority has set out its commitment to inclusion in the document “Ordinarily Available Provision” which has excellence for every child and young person at the heart of this guidance. It sets out a clear, ambitious framework for what all schools and settings should provide as part of their universal offer. It reflects our shared values: equity, respect, and high expectations for every learner, regardless of need or circumstance (Matthew Bennett, Interim Chief Executive Officer, December 2025).

The school advocates ‘inclusive education’ and believes that all teachers are now teachers of special educational needs. We are no longer a small setting, and as such we work closely with partner schools and Teacher Training Institutions offering training, advice and guidance to enhance and share teacher expertise in SEND and boost parent confidence. Our school

cohort is largely from Orret's Meadow and Hayfield, along with some other primary schools with SEND resource bases, and these special primary schools are prioritised when allocating places.

The school is ideally run to accommodate no more than 80 students in Years 7 to 11 (400 in total). The Governors, The National Autistic Society (NAS) and The National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN) recognise that Special Schools are small for a reason and going beyond this number would adversely and unfairly affect the children who already attend Clare Mount and our capacity to meet their EHCP needs. We run a small 6<sup>th</sup> form provision for pupils who have attended Clare Mount in lower school. It is strictly designed to support our most vulnerable and anxious students who need more time to make their next transition to a Further Education setting. Admission to 6th form is discussed at our Year 11 students' Annual Review after considering their attendance, behaviour and engagement in learning and commitment to the wider school community.

We firmly believe that with an 'inclusive education' approach that students who have attended mainstream primary schools can manage and flourish in mainstream secondary settings. Our motto of 'role models and catalysts for change' is very much centred around changing perceptions of 'disability' and breaking down barriers.

We recognise that parents naturally wish to secure the best options for their child's education, yet at the same time that fundamental and far-reaching reform of the SEND system is becoming inevitable – and indeed unavoidable (ISOS Report, 2024). Clare Mount is committed to working with different partners to find solutions to the current situation and sharing best practice, whilst at the same time safeguarding the characteristics and foundations that have made the school successful over the last 20 years.

### **Summary of Eligibility Criteria for Admission to Clare Mount Specialist Sports College**

For a placement to be offered, the following criteria must be met

- The child must have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)
- The child must have a confirmed diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and/or
- A confirmed diagnosis of Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD - CAT Scores below 70)
- Clare Mount must be suitable to the child's age, cognitive ability and special educational needs as outlined above
- The child's placement at the school is not incompatible with the efficient education of the other children with whom the child would be educated.
- The school does not admit students where needs can be appropriately met within a mainstream setting with support, or where a student's profile of need extends beyond the scope of the school's provision.
- Commitment to comply with the school's philosophy of education.
- Commitment to comply with the school's Code of Conduct and all associated. Expectations including attendance, uniform and appropriate /effective communication
- The child is 'ready for school', has a track record of regular in-person attendance and is able to access learning in the classroom.

All admissions are determined by the LA following statutory consultation with the school, parents/carers and relevant professionals, in line with the SEND Code of Practice 2015.

Please be aware that once our 80 Year 7 places are filled, any additional placement requests that go to tribunal may result in the young person being educated off our Birket Avenue site. Our current capacity is already placing strain on the learning environment and the sensory spaces our pupils rely on to thrive.

Prior to admission, the following steps will be followed:

- Students are identified by a local authority;
- A local authority sends an application for a place to Wirral SEN Team;
- Wirral SEN Team sends that application to Clare Mount Specialist Sports College;
- Clare Mount Specialist Sports College assesses the application based on the documentation provided;
- Clare Mount feed back to the LA whether they can meet needs and if there is capacity in the school;
- The placement is considered with close regard to the student's needs, additional reports, parental views and the views of the student;
- If the request progresses, the school may arrange a visit to the child's current place of education or home setting;
- An agreement is reached with the placing authority regarding the suitability of the placement, the support required, the funding band level and a potential start date;
- An enhanced transition is planned for all students commissioned a placement at Clare Mount depending on individual need.

### **Role of the Governing Body**

The Governing Body has:

- The duty to regularly review the agreed admission numbers;
- Delegated powers and responsibilities to the Headteacher to ensure all school personnel and visitors to the school are aware of and comply with this policy;
- Responsibility for ensuring that the school complies with all equalities' legislation;
- Responsibility for ensuring funding is in place to support this policy;
- Make effective use of relevant research and information to improve this policy;
- Responsibility for ensuring this policy and all policies are maintained and updated regularly;
- Responsibility for ensuring all policies are made available to parents;
- The responsibility of involving the School Council in:
  - determining this policy with the Governing Body;
  - discussing improvements to this policy during the school year and with consideration for school/local context, the changing educational landscape and Government policy;
  - organising surveys to gauge the thoughts of all pupils;
  - reviewing the effectiveness of this policy with the Governing Body.
- Nominated a link governor to:
  - visit the school regularly;
  - work closely with the Headteacher;
  - ensure this policy and other linked policies are up to date;
  - ensure that everyone connected with the school is aware of this policy;
  - attend training related to this policy;
  - report to the Governing Body every term;
  - annually report to the Governing Body on the success and development of this policy.
- Responsibility for the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this policy.

## **Role of the Headteacher / Senior Leaders**

The Headteacher / Senior Leaders in conjunction with the Governing Body will:

- Ensure all prospective parents are fully aware of the:
  - admissions criteria;
  - how to apply;
  - appeal process
- Ensure that all applications are looked at fairly and openly;
- Ensure all school personnel, pupils and parents are aware of and comply with this policy;
- Take decisions in the best interests of ALL current and prospective students in making sure they feel like they belong and have the opportunity to thrive.
- Ensure decisions are in keeping with our Well Schools Culture.

## **Clare Mount Specialist Sports College**

- Work closely with the link governor;
- Provide leadership and vision in respect of equality and inclusion;
- Provide guidance, support and training to all staff;
- Monitor the effectiveness of this policy by speaking with pupils, school personnel, parents and governors;
- Annually report to the Governing Body on the success and development of this policy.

## **Role of Parents/Carers**

Parents/carers must:

- Be aware of and comply with this policy;
- Apply by using the appropriate application form;
- See Wirral SEN team as the point of contact for admission enquiries
- If place is offered, engage with the admission process

## **Raising Awareness of this Policy**

We will raise awareness of this policy via:

- The School Handbook/Prospectus
- The school website
- The Staff Handbook
- Meetings with parents such as introductory, transition, parent-teacher consultations and periodic curriculum workshops
- School events
- Meetings with school personnel
- Advocacy with SENDSTART Caseworkers and relevant Local Authority employees, as well as colleagues from other schools so they are familiar with our 'school offer'.

## **Clare Mount Specialist Sports College**

- Parents newsletters/meetings and Headteacher reports to the Governing Body

## **Training**

Training will be provided for the Headteacher and all members of the senior leadership team, and the nominated governor that deals with:

- All aspects of this policy
- Admissions
- Admission and Attendance Registers
- Equality
- Inclusion

## **Equality Impact Assessment**

Under the Equality Act 2010 we have a duty not to discriminate against people on the basis of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil and it helps to promote equality at this school.

## **Monitoring the Implementation and Effectiveness of the Policy**

The practical application of this policy will be reviewed annually or when the need arises by the coordinator, the Headteacher and the nominated governor.

A statement of the policy's effectiveness and the necessary recommendations for improvement will be presented to the Governing Body for further discussion and endorsement.