



Clare Mount Specialist Sports College

Address: Birket Avenue, Leasowe, CH46 1RA

Unique reference number (URN): 105129

Inspection report: 19 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Exceptional ●

Achievement

Exceptional ●

Pupils achieve extraordinarily well. Leaders recognise that pupils' achievement takes many forms. This includes a notably high number of pupils achieving well in national qualifications. Where appropriate, academic pathways lead to pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieving highly across a range of GCSE subjects. Disadvantaged pupils achieve better than disadvantaged pupils nationally. Older pupils, including students in the sixth form, achieve a wide range of meaningful qualifications that build on the skills and knowledge they develop in the classroom and through meaningful work experience. As a result, they are very well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils in all pathways make substantial progress from their starting points. This is because leaders understand astutely that even the smallest of steps made can often represent hugely significant achievements. Pupils develop their communication, language and social skills particularly well. They consistently build the foundational knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics that they will need for the future.

Inclusion

Exceptional ●

Inclusion is woven into the fabric of the school's work. Leaders ensure that decisions are consistently made with the needs of the pupils in mind. This means that pupils who face barriers to their learning or wellbeing flourish in and out of school.

Leaders understand the often multiple and complex barriers that pupils face to their learning. They are forensic in their approach to working closely with pupils, their families and other external agencies to identify potential barriers to pupils' success. Leaders act exceedingly quickly to remove barriers to learning and wellbeing through nimble adjustments, strong pastoral support and consistently very high expectations for every pupil. This enables pupils to excel in their learning and development.

All pupils have an education, health and care plan. Staff are expertly trained to meet pupils' wide-ranging needs, adapting teaching deftly so pupils fully participate in lessons with confidence. Leaders and staff engage with academic research to drive innovative inclusive practice, such as using exercise equipment during movement breaks to help pupils manage their emotions and behaviour and return seamlessly to learning.

The school's pupil premium strategy is engineered purposefully to enhance the experiences of disadvantaged pupils. Pupils who are known, or previously known, to children's social care receive a range of highly effective emotional and academic support. When it is needed, alternative provision is used effectively to successfully support pupils' learning and personal development.

Leadership and governance

Exceptional ●

Leaders and governors provide high-quality oversight and direction. They are highly attuned and knowledgeable about the precise position of the school. Leaders have a meticulous

view of the priorities and act quickly when improvements are needed. Leaders' decisions are thoughtful and based on robust evidence. The best interests of pupils are always at the forefront of leaders' minds in any decision-making.

Leaders, over time, have nurtured an outward facing culture of shared professional learning. This ethos continually drives school improvement. Leaders and staff are the driving force in sharing their work through engagement with networks across the school and the local and national landscape. Leaders' commitment to an array of research-led initiatives have a sustained and transformative impact on pupils' education, wellbeing and long term success.

Governors are absolutely passionate about their work. They use their expertise to offer strong challenge and highly effective support in steering the school's improvement. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities diligently.

Staff at all levels feel valued. In recent times, the school has moved sites and pupil numbers have increased significantly. Staff appreciate how during this period of change, leaders have remained laser-focused on ensuring that their wellbeing and workload pressures are considered carefully. Leaders work effectively in partnership with families and show sensitive understanding of the challenges many parents and carers face. They provide extensive training, support and a calendar of social events, all of which help pupils feel sure-footed as they move between home and school each day.

Personal development and wellbeing

Exceptional ●

Provision for pupils' personal development is impressive. The school is relentless in its ambition to ensure every pupil benefits from a wide and rich range of experiences that equip them with the skills, knowledge and attributes needed to navigate the world with compassion and confidence. These extensive and carefully designed experiences positively change the lives and future opportunities for all pupils.

Leaders are determined that pupils develop aspirations and futures that they may once have believed were out of reach. Their deliberately incremental approach ensures that pupils, including those in the sixth form, are continually ready to take on greater personal challenges. Early opportunities to build resilience through activities such as rock climbing, sporting competitions and overnight residentials give pupils the self-belief to take on more ambitious experiences, including indoor skiing, talent shows and volunteering in Kenya. Pupils speak about these opportunities with evident pride.

Leaders have ensured that the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is ambitious and closely aligned to pupils' needs. Life skills and preparation for adulthood sit at its core. Sixth form students benefit from learning how to travel independently, join a gym and cook for their families. The relationships and sex education curriculum is highly effective, giving pupils the knowledge they need to stay safe and form healthy relationships. The quality of the school's personal development and wellbeing provision is reflected constantly in pupils' outward embodiment of key learning, such as celebrating differences, showing mutual respect, and taking on varied leadership roles.

Pastoral support and pupils' wellbeing are exceptionally well provided for. Regular checks on pupils' mental and physical health ensure that those who may need counselling or access to

health services, receive timely, well targeted support. Pupils benefit from initiatives such as 'talk times' and 'thera-play'.

Careers education is a particular strength. Pupils value high quality work related learning and strong careers guidance. Transitions to post 16 provision are thoughtfully planned. Sixth form students follow carefully selected programmes of work experience that prepare them exceptionally well for their next steps.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders work effectively with pupils, external agencies and a range of highly skilled staff, including counsellors and family support workers, to ensure that the school's attendance strategy is highly successful - and it is. Leaders track attendance carefully. They use this information to plan a range of deeply personalised approaches to help pupils attend more frequently. Rates of absence are consistently lower than those seen nationally for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Across the school, pupils behave remarkably well. Leaders have fostered a culture of mutual respect, where relationships across the school are warm and positive. Pupils move around the school with a high degree of independence and are trusted by adults to uphold the school's high expectations. Although staff supervision is present, adults rarely need to intervene because pupils demonstrate impressive self control and respect for others. These positive attitudes extend into lessons, where pupils apply themselves diligently and take pride in their work. Older pupils set an excellent example for younger pupils. Any pupils who struggle to manage their emotions receive timely and purposeful help. Leaders' actions have a clear and sustained impact on pupils' experience of school.

Leaders ensure that any incidents of bullying, discrimination or harassment are addressed promptly and effectively.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

Leaders are highly ambitious for pupils. They have an in-depth understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching across the school. This helps leaders to make astute decisions about how to refine the curriculum so that it best meets pupils' changing needs.

Pupils access a broad range of subjects through intelligently designed curriculum pathways. The curriculum is meticulously tailored to each pupil, incorporating their education, health and care plan outcomes. As a result, pupils pursue a wide array of academic qualifications and vocational awards that align with their individual needs and aspirations. For each subject, learning is carefully ordered so that pupils' new learning builds securely on what has gone before.

Teachers use approaches that help pupils learn securely. They combine their secure subject knowledge with a skilful understanding of special educational needs and/or disabilities. This

ensures that they agilely make any reasonable adjustments that pupils need. For example, they break complex ideas into smaller steps to help pupils understand them. Teachers model examples, so that pupils can see what success looks like. Teachers revisit key knowledge regularly to strengthen pupils' memory and understanding. They continually check that pupils are engaged in their work and that they are learning the skills they need.

Many pupils, including students in the sixth form, receive additional support to help improve their reading fluency. This support is very well taught and adapted carefully to pupils' individual needs. Staff help pupils develop important knowledge and skills in communication, writing and mathematics that they need for learning across the curriculum.

Post 16 provision

Strong standard ●

Leaders have designed a high-quality and relevant curriculum for post-16 study. Leaders check the quality of teaching often and act quickly when improvements are needed. They make sure the curriculum meets students' needs and prepares them well for their next steps. This is because leaders know students' strengths, interests and barriers, and shape courses and experiences around these. Students follow a mix of qualifications, including vocational and entry level pathways. These help them to build real skills in readiness for work and life beyond school.

Staff know the students very well. Teaching is carefully adapted to help all students learn and achieve. Staff check what students, including those who are disadvantaged, can do and give them the help that they need to make highly positive progress from their starting points.

Careers information and guidance are clear and personalised to individual students. Staff work closely with students and their families to identify next steps and make sure that transitions are extremely well supported and successful. Leaders work closely with local colleges and training providers to strengthen the options available for students at ages 18 and 19. Leaders work collaboratively to help these providers gain a deeper understanding of Clare Mount students and all that they can offer. This ensures that the vast majority of students move on to a suitable college course, training place or supported work pathway.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

This is a place that fosters a truly remarkable haven of calm and learning. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, flourish socially and academically. A passion for pupils' success underpins everything the school does. Whatever pupils' needs, staff work relentlessly to enable them to succeed. Staff inspire pupils to become curious and independent beyond the classroom. Pupils are safe, feel understood and valued.

The school puts no ceiling on pupils' academic or social achievements. This ambition is embodied in the way both staff and pupils live out the school's motto, striving to be true 'catalysts for change'. Through a thoughtfully designed curriculum, pupils follow pathways and take qualifications in subjects that are tailored skilfully to their aspirations and ambitions. Pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities, love learning and

receive the bespoke support they need to thrive. They achieve extremely highly across a wide range of subjects. The school's work has a lasting impact on pupils.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Highly effective classroom and social time routines mean that pupils know exactly what to expect and when. Bullying is extremely rare. Pupils are confident that staff will help with any concerns. Pupils are expertly supported by staff to become confident in their communication with others. This contributes significantly to pupils' growing self-esteem and their ability to recognise and embrace their own unique talents. Pupils attend well. Those that need it get help to improve their attendance.

The school provides pupils with the tools and firm foundations for their next steps in life. This is also true for students in the sixth form. Right from the start, the vast array of carefully crafted wider experiences offered to pupils focus on developing them as active citizens. Pupils are incredibly well prepared for their future lives. The impact of the school is transformative for many pupils.

Next steps

- Leaders and governors should continue to refine and embed their identified priorities for improvement in order to drive a transformational impact for all pupils.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Trudi Brooks.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and the designated safeguarding lead, during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority, the virtual headteacher, members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.

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.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and are in receipt of an education, health and care plan. The school provides for pupils with moderate and specific learning difficulties. Many pupils have autism.

The school makes use of one registered alternative provision for a very small number of pupils.

Since the previous inspection, the school has significantly increased in size. At the time of this inspection, there were 460 pupils on roll.

Headteacher: Dan Keefe

Lead inspector:

Kate Bowker, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:


Stuart Perkins, His Majesty's Inspector

Lee Fazackerley, Ofsted Inspector

Gaynor Roberts, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 19 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

410

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

School capacity

400

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

56.22%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

100.00%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

0.00%

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

ASD - Autistic Spectrum Disorder, MLD - Moderate Learning Difficulty

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (if applicable).

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school
2023 leavers (revised)	88%
2022 leavers (revised)	88%
2021 leavers (revised)	95%

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school
2024/25 (3 term)	11.2%
2023/24 (3 term)	11.4%
2022/23 (3 term)	10.8%

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school
2024/25 (3 term)	32.8%

Year	This school
2023/24 (3 term)	35.3%
2022/23 (3 term)	32.3%

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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