

Cherry Trees School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	124516
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	380909
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2012
Lead inspector	Sue Aldridge

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	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David James
Headteacher	Paul Elliott
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2009
School address	Giggetty Lane Wombourne Wolverhampton WV5 0AX
Telephone number	01902 894484
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Age group	2–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sue Aldridge

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed parts of nine lessons; four of these were joint observations with the deputy headteacher. Altogether, five different teachers were observed. Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff with subject responsibilities, representatives of the governing body and pupils. The inspector listened to pupils read, talked to them about their learning, and scrutinised their work, records and data collected showing their progress. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including evidence in support of the school's self-evaluation, policies, risk assessments, staff training records and the record of recruitment checks. Questionnaires completed by 21 parents and carers, 18 staff and 22 pupils were collated and analysed.

Information about the school

This small school serves a large area of South West Staffordshire. All pupils have statements of special educational needs describing learning difficulties that are either severe or moderate. Most have autism and a few have emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. There are many more boys than girls. All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. A very small number of pupils are in the care of the local authority. Most classes contain pupils of different year groups; the small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught alongside pupils in Year1. The school has the Basic Skills Award and is working towards Dyslexia Friendly Status.

Cherry Trees was visited as part of an Ofsted science survey in 2009. On the 1 January 2010, the school joined a federation with Wightwick Hall School, a secondary special school, which was not inspected at the same time as Cherry Trees. The two schools now have a common governing body and share an executive headteacher. The school is facing a significant cut in its budget from April 2012.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school; it is not outstanding because the quality of teaching is good rather than outstanding and subject leaders do not fully use pupils' performance data as a measure of the effectiveness of development work. There are very high levels of parental confidence and satisfaction. Staff are strongly committed to meeting individual needs and provide a caring and very supportive environment in which pupils feel perfectly safe. Pupils are proud of their school and of themselves because there are excellent opportunities to develop their self-esteem.
- All groups of pupils achieve equally well from low starting points, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils make particularly good progress in reading and communication skills and some reach the standards expected in reading by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning contribute well to their progress. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that there is no bullying or unpleasantness between them. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe and they contribute well to school life.
- Teaching is good. Typically, lessons are well planned to ensure that all pupils in the mixed-age classes are provided with suitably challenging tasks. Warm working relationships between staff and pupils lead to pupils being well motivated and enthusiastic in most lessons.
- The school is well led and managed. The executive headteacher has effectively communicated his vision for the school's future, and this is shared by staff and governors. The good leadership of teaching includes accurate evaluation of staff performance. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders know what needs to be improved to achieve its aim of becoming outstanding. There have been good improvements since the last inspection showing that there is a good capacity to improve further.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that teachers consistently
 - identify precise learning objectives for all activities in lessons
 - involve pupils more in self-assessment and make them aware of the next steps in their learning.
- Extend the role of subject leaders so that they make the best use of pupils' performance data to evaluate the impact of the development work undertaken.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The school is rightly confident that their assessment of pupils' skills is accurate because it is regularly compared and agreed with other teachers. Staff use national guidance effectively to set ambitious targets for pupils. The school's data show that all pupils at Cherry Trees make equally good progress irrespective of their gender, ability or need. More-able pupils make good progress from low starting points to reach standards in reading in Year 2 and Year 6 that are similar to those expected nationally. A small number have reading ages above their chronological age. Pupils with communication difficulties make good progress because they benefit from well-constructed programmes drawn up in conjunction with a speech and language therapist. Programmes are implemented effectively by skilled staff so that pupils all develop a means of communicating by the time they leave school.

In the high response to the parental questionnaire, all parents and carers agreed that their children are making good progress. One noted 'For the first time in his life, he is happy at school'. Similarly, another commented, 'The progress that my child has made since attending Cherry Trees is significant'. The pupils' questionnaires were similarly positive, and pupils' enjoyment of their learning was evident in many lessons seen.

In lessons, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. Routines, such as using visual timetables, are quickly established. Almost all pupils respond quickly to directions from staff. Visual timetables enable pupils to take increasing responsibility for their learning by moving quickly on to the next activity with little prompting from staff. Pupils are well motivated by the school's reward system. They are delighted to earn well-deserved merits during lessons because they know that they will be able to share their success with everyone in the end-of-day assembly. More-able pupils work independently, concentrating on tasks for good periods of time. Their work is neat and presented well. Those who need considerable adult support in order to remain focused on tasks are generally cooperative, although

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occasionally they need a great deal of prompting. On a few occasions, pupils refuse to take part in activities, despite the staff's best efforts.

Quality of teaching

All parental questionnaires reflect strong confidence in the teaching. A typical comment was, 'Attention to detail and note of his particular needs have helped him develop communication and interaction'. Planning for the range of ages and abilities is a particular strength. It starts with high expectations of what pupils might achieve. Teachers ensure that all pupils are suitably challenged. Methods include varying the outcomes expected and the difficulty of tasks, adapting resources, utilising the skilled support of teaching assistants, and putting groups of similar ability together. Curriculum planning contributes to the good progress pupils make; it takes good account of the mixed-age classes, so that pupils do not miss out or repeat work unnecessarily.

The school has considerable success with pupils who have had previously unsuccessful experiences of school. These pupils' attitudes and behaviour improve well, which in turn accelerates their academic progress. Occasionally, lesson planning is incomplete because staff do not identify precise learning outcomes for all activities. This includes those known as 'choice', where pupils are not directed by adults, and select from a range of possible activities. As a result, opportunities are missed for adults to assess learning, such as whether pupils are sustaining a selected activity or not.

Staff make good use of specialised approaches. These include the use of low-stimulus booths for pupils to work in, symbols combined with text to support pupils' understanding, and signing. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning through taking responsibility for individuals and small groups as well as providing well-judged support that encourages independence.

Pupils are well aware of their learning. They all agree that they learn a lot in lessons and that teaching is good. Many know their individual targets. Learning outcomes are shared and displayed during lessons, and frequent feedback is given so that pupils are aware of how well they are doing. In the best examples, pupils are involved in assessing their own knowledge or confidence in their understanding of concepts; they are also clear about their next steps, giving them a link to the next lesson or activity. However, these latter features are not consistently strong in all classes.

Teaching is effective in encouraging spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. For example, in an Early Years Foundation Stage lesson, children made good progress in cooperating by taking turns to build a tower of bricks and then knocking it over. Pupils also learn about rules, such as when using computers or the swimming pool. For 'special assemblies' classes work together to find out about different aspects of cultures and present this to their peers to give a complete experience on the day.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

All parents, carers and pupils agree that behaviour is good. There are occasions when behaviour is exemplary in lessons. However, there are a few occasions when learning is fragmented by a small number of pupils whose behaviour is particularly challenging. The school can show that it successfully turns these pupils around. Improvements in attendance, attitudes and behaviour are achieved, and these result in pupils making much better progress. The pupils who understand what constitutes bullying are adamant that there is none of this in the school. They say that they are always kind to one another, and they feel perfectly safe. Records suggest that this is the case; no instances of bullying or racism are recorded and there have been no exclusions since the last inspection.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe because this is encouraged well through their experiences. Opportunities include learning about road safety and using cutting tools safely in food preparation. Pupils know that they must never use computers unless they are supervised by adults. Experiences of outdoor learning enable them to cook safely on a campfire and mount a climbing wall securely strapped into a harness.

Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to the school and contribute well to school life. They grow vegetables, recycle waste, organise coffee mornings and help to run stalls. They raise funds for the school and charities. They are motivated by the 'house' system, and keenly follow the overall scores displayed. They proudly show visitors their work as well as photographic records of the memorable experiences they have enjoyed.

Leadership and management

The good quality of leadership and management and ongoing school improvement indicate a good capacity for further improvement. Through the federation, enterprise activities have been developed. The staff of both schools share expertise and professional development which have improved the quality of teaching. Pupils visit Wightwick Hall often which prepares them well for their move to secondary school. The new governing body has established committees that effectively keep the school's work under review. Individuals with particular areas of expertise take responsibility for certain aspects, such as utilising data to check on the school's effectiveness. Governors visit regularly with a particular focus. They are well informed, supportive and provide increasing challenge for the school's leaders.

Curricular opportunities are good; they meet pupils' needs and promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. As the school roll has fallen, specialist areas have been developed as accommodation has become available. This good accommodation enhances the curriculum, providing facilities such as covered outdoor learning areas, a sensory room, a soft play area, a computer suite and a swimming pool.

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The executive headteacher has led the development of subject leader roles. This has been supported by professional development in which staff have been trained to audit their subjects using data and observation. However, the school does not always use its wealth of data to maximum effect to demonstrate its success. For instance, following the science survey, action was taken to increase opportunities for pupils to use practical, problem-solving approaches in science. This has not been followed up by measuring the impact on pupils' performance in that strand of science.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. Staff are all trained in child protection and recruitment procedures are good. There is suitable additional training, in aspects such as positive handling. Staff work constructively with several agencies to ensure that pupils have the additional support they need. The school works successfully to ensure that there is no discrimination of any kind. Any pupil not making expected progress is followed up swiftly to ensure that each individual has the best chance to succeed.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



23 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cherry Trees School, Wolverhampton, WV5 0AX

Thank you for making me welcome at Cherry Trees, for talking to me about your school and completing questionnaires. I enjoyed my visit, especially listening to some of you reading and seeing you celebrating your merit awards in assembly.

Cherry Trees is a good school. Your parents and carers are delighted with what the school provides for you. I was impressed with how proud you are of your school and your work. I noticed that you all get on well together and was pleased to hear that you all feel safe at school. You all do important jobs in school too, such as recycling, growing vegetables and planning coffee mornings.

The teaching is good and so you are all making good progress. You said that you learn a lot in lessons and I found that this is true. In some lessons you make excellent progress and are very well behaved. The staff give you the right amount of help and I was pleased to see that many of you are able to concentrate and work on your own for parts of lessons. I saw you enjoying your learning and most of you know what your targets are.

Those that are in charge at Cherry Trees are doing a good job but there is some room for improvement. We have agreed that to make the school even better, staff will plan for every activity in each lesson and make sure that you are clear about the next steps in learning. They are going to involve you more by asking you how well you have done, or understood the work, in lessons.

When staff make improvements they are going to measure how these affect your achievements too. You can help with improvement by keeping up your good work in improving attendance. I wish you all well.

Yours sincerely

Sue Aldridge
Lead inspector

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