

The Orchard School

Causeway Green Road, Oldbury, B68 8LD

Inspection dates 11–12 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Every pupil is pushed to do the very best they can. They make progress that is consistently at least good and often outstanding.
- Pupils enjoy school a lot. Tremendously positive relationships with staff support their personal and social development, as well as academic learning, extremely well.
- Outstanding teaching is exceptionally well supported by detailed information collected about every pupil's progress and needs.
- Teachers use this information very well to plan work that is specific to each pupil and helps them achieve as much as they can.
- Facilities, including those for information and communication technology (ICT), are of high quality. For example, a program controlled by eye movement gives pupils with extremely limited mobility access to whole new learning opportunities.
- Children get off to the best possible start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because every child's needs are identified and provided for. Activities are designed to excite and motivate children to learn as well as cater for these needs.
- Staff are highly skilled at helping pupils to develop their communication and self-help skills whatever their level of needs.
- Staff are very skilled in behaviour management, and particularly in helping pupils to find other ways of expressing their emotions and feelings. This means that little learning time is lost, and pupils are kept safe and secure.
- Leaders are highly focused on producing the very best outcomes for pupils. Their clear vision is shared by all staff, creating an extremely positive learning community.
- Extensive training supports the constantly improving teaching. Staff support many other schools through their expertise. All this has helped make the school even better than at its last inspection, when it was also judged outstanding.
- Governance is exceptional. Governors bring a range of highly relevant expertise to their roles. This ensures the school is constantly striving to be the best it can possibly be.

Information about this inspection

- Ten lessons were observed during the inspection. All were jointly observed with a member of the school's senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, and teachers with specific responsibilities within school. Inspectors met the Chair of the Governing Body and other representative governors, and a representative of the local authority. Discussions were held with other professionals who provide services for pupils who are based in the school.
- The views of parents were gathered from the 16 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and the school's own questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors met formally with a group of pupils and spoke to as many as possible during the inspection to ensure that their views were taken into account wherever possible.
- Staff views were gathered from the responses to the staff questionnaire and from conversations held with them throughout the inspection.
- Pupils' work was looked at during lesson observations and through scrutinies of work produced by pupils throughout the school. A small group were heard reading.
- Inspectors examined a range of written documentation, including information on pupils' progress and development, teachers' planning and assessment, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, and a range of policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Taylor

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Orchard is a school for pupils with severe learning difficulties or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Many pupils have additional complex learning needs, including visual and hearing impairment, and autistic spectrum disorders.
- It is a designated teaching school, providing support and training to other schools in the local authority, training staff for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and working in partnership with the University of Wolverhampton to train teachers.
- The proportion of pupils who benefit from the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or who are in the care of the local authority) is far above average.
- The proportion who are from minority ethnic communities and also speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- Every pupil has a statement of special educational needs or is undergoing formal assessment prior to gaining a statement.
- Since the last inspection a new headteacher has been appointed. As part of restructuring of the leadership team, one of the assistant headteachers was appointed as an additional deputy headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure all teachers use a consistent approach when they gather samples of work, so that it is easier to accurately compare pupils' standards within the school and against other local special schools.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils' achievement, both in academic skills such as those needed for progress in English and mathematics, and learning wider skills to promote communication, is outstanding. Nearly every pupil makes at least good progress and a high proportion do outstandingly well.
- Huge care is taken to note even the smallest steps in learning. In the Early Years Foundation Stage the school takes immense care to ensure that when children are able to master a skill for the first time, such as making choices or responding to objects of reference all staff are aware. They then seek to ensure that this skill can be seen again and opportunities created to reinforce it in practice. Clear evidence shows that from the start children are making excellent progress.
- In Years 1 to 6 there is an extremely successful focus on helping to develop every pupil's communication skills. This attention to individual needs ensures that all groups of pupils make equally rapid progress, including those learning English as an additional language.
- Sometimes the ability to communicate and learn is supported by extremely sophisticated technology. For example, pupils with extremely limited physical movement can operate computer software with their eyes, making choices electronically and gaining access to exciting learning opportunities that support their progress.
- Pupils who benefit from the pupil premium do exceptionally well because funding is targeted so effectively. Much is spent on additional staffing to enable extra support to be given, or in buying technology to open up new ways of learning, such as the eye-gaze technology, or at a more simple level hand-held computers that allows pupils to observe and reflect on their own learning. The impact of every initiative is measured extremely effectively. This shows that eligible pupils are now outperforming the others in both English and mathematics in terms of the proportion who are reaching the highest levels in these subjects in the progression guidance.
- The most able pupils are also supported extremely well. When pupils' attainment can be measured against National Curriculum levels the work given reflects this, enabling them to be successful. Those who show other talents are also given strong encouragement, such as improving their physical abilities at a local leisure centre. Activities include using the climbing wall, to promote skills of dexterity, coordination and movement.
- All pupils have severe learning difficulties, so attainment is very low. However, their progress throughout the school is measured against figures produced by the government, called the national progression guidance. Pupils from The Orchard make good to outstanding progress from their various different starting points.
- Pupils learn to use the skills they are able to develop within their capabilities in all areas of learning. The preparation for the move to secondary school begins in Year 5 and strong links with it mean that pupils are very well prepared for their next stage of their life.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Throughout the school teaching supports the excellent progress made by pupils over time. Pupil progress meetings are held with teachers each term and individual progress is continually reviewed. Teachers know their pupils and their capabilities extremely well because of the high quality of the information gathered on their achievements and progress so far.

- Lesson planning also reflects the drive to sustain improvement because it focuses on next steps in a consistent drive to ensure that challenging targets are met.
- Teachers show high expectations and highly effective teams of learning support assistants in each class work with them to provide support of the highest quality. The school values them all as effective professionals. Adults work together to ensure that pupils get the very best teaching and support in every class, helping them to make the best possible progress.
- All staff are confident in using the wide range of high quality resources that reinforce teaching and learning. Most recently this has included technology such as hand-held computers, used, for example, to film pupils so they can see and analyse their learning. Effective resources help all pupils, whatever their learning difficulties, to make progress.
- Teachers collect and keep samples of pupils' work to show progress over time. Careful checking of the accuracy of these judgements work is reinforced by similar checking undertaken with other successful special schools. This confirms the excellent progress being made by many pupils. However, not all teachers currently collate information in the same way. This can make comparisons between the work and achievement of different pupils difficult, despite the sophisticated and detailed ways in which the progress of individuals, groups and the school as a whole are measured.
- Teachers and learning support assistants are skilled at asking pupils questions at the right level to ensure they are challenged to think more deeply, but also to gauge pupils' understanding further and adapt the work. Teachers demand the best. In one class where a pupil gave a rather quick and unclear response the teacher simply said, 'I'm just going to ask you that again' – and got a far fuller answer the second time.
- Every lesson contains a range of stimulating activities, but what is exceptional is the extent to which planning takes into account the needs, ability and current level of every pupil. This also reflects a strong commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity because there is an expectation that effective teaching will help all to maximise their progress. It also makes lessons extremely enjoyable, so that relationships between adults and pupils are very strong and engagement in learning is strong.
- Every time a new behaviour or skill is demonstrated for the first time, care is taken to ensure that it is noted immediately so that it can be more formally recorded later. In this way even the smallest steps of progress are recognised and valued. The degree to which this supports increasing communication skills in particular is a real strength.
- The contribution made by other professionals who are based at the school, such as teachers of the visual and hearing impaired, and physio, occupational and speech and language therapists is another strength in ensuring effective learning. Working alongside teachers in classes, their extra support ensures that pupils eligible for their support are helped directly to maximise their progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Many can display extremely challenging behaviour as a result of wider difficulties. Over time they learn to moderate this, supported by the consistent use of the very effective behaviour policy and highly skilled behaviour management.

- This means that behaviour does not hold back learning. On the contrary, because pupils often get on so well with each other and with staff, there is a positive atmosphere in lessons and pupils get a great deal of enjoyment from their learning and from being at school.
- The development of social skills, such as sharing, collaborating and helping each other is a reflection of the highly effective promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. This view is shared by parents and other professionals associated with the school. All staff are fully trained to deal with the odd occasion where restraint is necessary to stop a pupil hurting themselves or others, and its use is fully recorded. There is always a focus on de-escalating potentially dangerous incidents.
- Care is taken to assess the risks presented by any situation. This means that pupils are safe when they are out of school on trips and visits, including residential visits.
- Pupils are supported to develop the greatest understanding of personal safety of which they are capable. Adults working with them ensure that environments are safe.
- Attendance has been rising over time, despite the fact that some pupils have extremely fragile health which affects their ability to attend school. The collaboration with other professionals who are based at the school supports high attendance because, for example, pupils do not need time off for attending appointments.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team have a dynamic vision for enabling every pupil to reach their full potential and live life to the fullest possible extent. Responses to the staff questionnaire show that the whole school community is committed to making this an extremely successful school.
- Leadership has been revised to give greater autonomy and accountability to deputy headteachers and to teachers who are responsible for each phase within the school or key subject areas. This holds leaders at all levels to account and they have risen to the challenge with a pride in the successful work they do to support the school.
- Highly effective monitoring of teaching, planning and assessment creates a very clear picture of the high quality of teaching throughout the school. It also underpins an effective, detailed and supportive process of appraisal in which all staff have challenging annual objectives linked to pupils' progress.
- The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate and detailed. It identifies the right priorities for continual development. It enables the range of subjects and topics taught to reflect the needs and abilities of the pupils, so that they can all access learning at the right level.
- The grant for physical education and sport has been used very effectively to increase the opportunities available to pupils and the expertise of staff. It supports access to a greater range of sports and funds the use of a professional coach. There has been an increase in accessibility and participation, leading to pupils' enhanced physical skills, as a result.
- Links with parents are strong, reflected in the extremely supportive responses to the school's questionnaire. This includes many opportunities for parents to come into school, either for social

opportunities or to learn something about some element of special needs education from an expert in their field.

- Links with other professionals are outstanding. Therapists often work alongside teachers in class, helping pupils physically during the school day to support their wider abilities to learn effectively, while consultants' appointments are held at the school. This minimises stress for pupils and parents, and cuts the time lost to learning, while therapists and teachers work closely and effectively towards joint targets to ensure that individual progress is maximised.
- Those responsible for the Teaching School element work very effectively with other schools, the local authority and local universities to ensure that they help colleagues throughout the authority and are successful in using The Orchard's expertise to support others. This helps pupils with a range of disabilities to remain in their local mainstream schools. It also provides first-class training and meets professional needs in the area of special educational needs in the locality.
- The local authority provides 'light-touch' support for the school. It rightly identifies that it is outstanding. It has, for example, supported a range of training for governors of the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is outstanding and the members of the governing body bring a wide range of relevant professional expertise to support and challenge the senior leaders. They meet all their statutory responsibilities, including those for safeguarding. Governors have a clear overview of the finances of the school. They know exactly how the pupil premium is allocated and the impact that it has at an individual pupil level. They have a detailed knowledge of what goes on in school because they find out for themselves. This includes individual governors linking with specific staff and observing lessons. This gives them an excellent overview of the quality of teaching. They are fully aware of the links between teachers' pay and performance, and the procedures for improving teaching. Challenging targets are set for the headteacher each year. Governors have received training in how to analyse school performance data so they can challenge the school over pupils' achievement very effectively. They are very proud of the success of pupils and are hugely committed to the school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	132232
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	431582

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bill Jinks
Headteacher	Grace Kew
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2011
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