

Cherry Garden School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100881
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	285908
Inspection date	22 May 2007
Reporting inspector	James Bowden

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	45
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Ms Teresa Neary
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2001
School address	Macks Road London SE16 3XU
Telephone number	020 7237 4050
Fax number	020 7237 7513

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Cherry Garden School provides for learners with severe and complex learning needs who need supervision at all times. All have communication difficulties, with 95% presenting as non-verbal, and all have a statement of special educational need. Three classes are allocated for learners on the autistic spectrum and the other four classes provide education for those with severe and complex needs, including profound and multiple learning difficulties and physical difficulties. In addition, a quarter of learners have an allocated social worker because of their disabilities and another quarter have periods of intervention. Some 45% have single parents.

Currently, there are six learners in the Foundation Stage and 39 in Years 1 to 6. Overall there are almost twice as many boys than girls. The ethnic background of learners is mixed and reflects the ethnic mix of the local community. The curriculum has been modified to meet the complexity of learners' needs and all are exempt from national statutory tests.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Cherry Garden School aims to create a friendly and calm environment where individuality is celebrated and where every learner is allowed to communicate at his or her own level. It is exceptionally effective and provides an outstanding quality of education and care for all its learners, in both the school and the Foundation Stage. A visitor to the school commented: 'I was impressed by the range of activities the school was undertaking - so creative and exciting. The children were magnificent and the dedication and commitment of the staff shone through.'

A major strength is the multi-agency approach adopted by the school, which enhances considerably the quality of learners' progress. The school also works very closely with parents and carers who are overwhelmingly appreciative of its work. One commented: 'I feel my son enjoys school and has good relationships with his teachers. Everyone who deals with my son is well informed about him and his abilities.'

Achievement is outstanding across the school. Although standards are very low because of the extent of learners' complex special needs and medical conditions, the progress they make is excellent. Learners make especially fast progress in communication skills, often using signs and symbols very effectively. Annual reviews of learners' progress indicate that only one or two learners do not meet or exceed the very appropriate and challenging targets set in their individual education plans (IEPs).

Learners' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural development is excellent. In lessons, learners are enabled to share activities and take turns when appropriate. In a Foundation Stage lesson, two learners listened well to the teacher and both waited their turn to work on the interactive whiteboard. Older learners are encouraged to celebrate each other's success and willingly do so. During the inspection learners behaved very well in lessons and their perseverance in activities was indicative of their enjoyment. Attendance is good, being close to the national average for all schools.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. As a result of the setting of effective short-term targets in relation to communication, language and literacy as well as numeracy, achievement is also outstanding. Teaching also ensures learners are making excellent progress towards the targets set in their IEPs. Resources to develop learners' communication skills are particularly well used and teachers and other adults in the room work really effectively as a team. The curriculum is excellent because it meets fully the needs of all learners and the whole day is regarded as learning time. The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for learners. School staff and other professionals are dedicated and highly committed to working with learners in order to promote their personal and academic development.

Indicative of highly effective leadership and management is the whole staff ethos of continuing self-evaluation to ensure the school's core aims are fully met. Regular multi-agency meetings are effective and efficient ensuring learners' care is integrated throughout the whole day. Development planning is used effectively to ensure there is a focus on continuing improvement. Apart from accommodation, which is beyond the control of the school, issues from the previous inspection have been successfully dealt with. Because of the cramped nature of the building, the school is unable to increase the amount of places on offer. The school also has limited opportunities to provide outreach support in the borough in order to share its expertise with other schools where there are learners with complex needs. The governing body works very closely with the school and is highly effective as a supportive and critical friend. Excellent

leadership and management and the school's improving track record show there is excellent capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work with the local authority to develop outreach work in order to share its expertise with other schools.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Learning is individualised with each learner having individual targets for communication, language and literacy, numeracy and other National Curriculum subjects. Teachers closely monitor progress towards these targets as well as targets set in IEPs. All learners operate at 'P' levels - levels that are well below standard National Curriculum levels in schools. Records show that the optional targets set by the school were exceeded in the past two years. In 2006, approximately three-quarters of learners moved up the 'P' level scale and almost all learners met or exceeded their IEP targets. Learners' fast progress in communication skills enables them to use signs and symbols very effectively, which has a very positive effect on their progress in early literacy and numeracy skills. Learners also grow in confidence and are willing to try to apply their physical and social skills in a range of settings.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Learners receive an exceptionally high level of individual support from all who work in the school. Staff are enthusiastic, care and form warm and very trusting relationships with learners. As a result, learners have positive attitudes to school, smiling faces and positive body language on arrival to school. Though there may be the occasional outburst of inappropriate behaviour, learners respond very well to staff intervention and quickly settle down. Learners achieve very well in relation to the healthy living goals in their IEPs and eat fresh and healthy food prepared on site. Learners clearly relish the opportunity to improve physically and develop their independence. In a physical education lesson, a determined learner spotted an opportunity to step onto a bench next to a low-level basketball ring to try and ensure success. At annual reviews, learners are enabled to make the school aware of what aspects of their education they like through, for example, visual symbols or 'yes' and 'no' responses to visual stimuli. Evidence shows they enjoy school and the activities on offer. Learners are enabled to visit local shops and use their improving communication skills to communicate with local people. Because of clear improvements in communication skills and developing independence, learners are being very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

All staff know their learners very well and ensure their needs are met by focusing on both attainment targets as well as targets in IEPs, which are part of their individualised learning programmes. Teachers' planning is thus highly focused to ensure the learning needs of all are fully met. Lessons are calm, purposeful and challenging, learners are fully engaged and, as a result, they make significant progress towards their targets. High quality visual, tactile and

auditory resources motivate learners well and their responses are carefully logged in order to help the school to track effectively their progress. In one lesson, the use of music, fine water sprays, shells, auditory props to replicate the sound of waves and staff singing all enlivened the quality of learning particularly well. Learners responded exceptionally well to this. Staff are extremely patient and their expertise ensures learning is purposeful and challenging, not only in formal lessons but also in all activities throughout the day.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is exceptionally well matched and modified to meet the complex needs of learners, each learner following an individually tailored programme. There is a focus on communication, language, literacy and numeracy throughout the school as well as an ongoing focus on provision to develop learners' personal skills and attributes. A rolling programme of themed activities enlivens learning whilst at the same time providing access to the full range of National Curriculum subjects. A broad range of on and off-site activities that include horse riding, swimming, visits to the community and a range of activities provided by visitors to the school enrich the school day. The school's curricular provision has been recently recognised by the national Arts Mark Gold award. Sensory and soft playrooms as well as well-resourced outdoor play areas enhance further the quality of provision. Classrooms and other areas are exciting learning environments because of high quality display and a wide range of resources. Information and communication technology is used very effectively to promote engagement in learning. Learners are well supported in preparing for the next stage in their education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides a particularly strong, caring and supporting environment where learners develop their personal qualities and make excellent progress towards the targets set for them. A parent commented: 'We are very happy as parents - we have seen the progress our child has made and we are so pleased with the work and commitment of the staff. Keep up the good work.' Arrangements for ensuring health and safety are very strong, both on and off-site. Child protection, and risk assessment procedures are securely in place and all staff are aware of their responsibilities. Incident and physical restraint records are regularly updated. The school's multi-agency approach and use of outside professional agencies, including full-time nursing provision, greatly enhances the quality of support learners receive.

High quality medical care, including weekly physiotherapy sessions, constant one-to-one adult support, well-focused individual learning programmes and IEPs add considerably to the progress learners make in lessons. Information on attainment and progress against baseline testing on entry to the school informs planning very effectively. On-going assessment against learners' targets ensures the school is clearly aware of how much progress learners make and what they need to do to improve further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The head teacher and her senior leadership team are highly effective and have been instrumental in developing the excellent ethos for learning and achievement in the school. Self-evaluation

is continuous and reflective with highly focused monitoring and evaluation of the school's effectiveness. As a result, improvement planning across the school is robust, areas identified for development are highly appropriate and challenging targets are set. All staff are highly committed to ensure every learner really matters, improving their communication skills and ultimately enabling them to achieve their full potential. Leadership has ensured the centre provides a high quality, well resourced learning environment, making most of the cramped conditions. However, accommodation limits the numbers of learners the school can provide for. The school's governing body, with key local representatives, takes an active part in the life of the school and is highly effective in its role as a supportive and critical friend.

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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
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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
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

4 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Cherry Garden School, London, SE16 3XU

I recently spent a day in your school and visited you in lessons as well as seeing you in other activities around the school. I enjoyed my time in the school and seeing how you really enjoy it there. I know that your parents are also very pleased with the education you receive. Cherry Garden is an excellent school. This is because:

- the headteacher leads the school exceptionally well
- the teaching is outstanding and means you make really good progress
- the teachers and all other adults who work with you staff make sure you are safe and extremely well cared for
- the teachers and all other adults who work with you are really dedicated and have your best interests at heart and want to make sure you will be able to do well in the future
- the curriculum and other activities during the day make your education very interesting.

However, the quality of the accommodation has not improved since the last time inspectors visited your school. The headteacher has done all that is possible to change this but, at present, this means that the numbers of children attending the school is limited.

The school would like to help children with similar needs to you in other schools but has not been able to offer as much help as it would like to. If the school works closely with your local education authority then this may be possible.

Best wishes,

James Bowden Lead inspector