

The Orchard School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132232
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	315980
Inspection dates	18–19 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Kathleen Smith HMI

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 on roll	
School	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Helen Atkins
Date of previous school inspection	12 May 2003
School address	Causeway green Road Olbury B68 8LD
Telephone number	0121 569 7040
Fax number	0121 569 7040

Age group	2-11
Inspection dates	18–19 September 2007
Inspection number	315980

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Orchard School is a day school for pupils with profound and severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities including an increasing number of those with visual impairment. There are currently 23 pupils in the Foundation Stage. There are 52 pupils from a minority ethnic background, which is higher proportion than usual, and a small number of looked after children. All have a statement of special educational need or are undergoing assessment.

The school moved into new premises in September 2006 and now operates from one site. It is the only primary school within Sandwell Local Authority for pupils with profound and severe learning difficulties and disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Orchard is a good school with many outstanding features. The headteacher and senior managers provide the school with a strong ethos and direction leading to high standards in pupils' personal development, good achievement and the promotion of outstanding care, support and guidance. There is a strong focus on providing a safe, secure and nurturing learning environment for those pupils whose learning is hampered by their often considerable medical, physical, sensory and learning disabilities. The school is successful in improving the pupils' social skills and behaviour through the excellent support they receive from skilled and highly trained staff. This improves their quality of life and inclusion within the wider community.

Most pupils make good progress in their learning through the outstanding opportunities afforded to them through the curriculum, out of school activities and strong links with other local schools and community groups. Teaching and learning are good overall and provide pupils with enjoyable and interesting activities for them to learn. In a few cases pupils with higher levels of ability are not suitably challenged within lessons. Targets for pupils to achieve are successfully integrated within all curriculum activities and pupils' progress is good. The school analyses pupils' progress effectively and implements actions to remedy any underachievement well.

There are excellent working relationships with other providers and agencies, and these have had a positive effect on the development of curriculum activities. In turn, other schools and organisations have benefited from the expertise provided by the school's leaders, managers and staff. The school's capacity to improve is good. Many improvements to provision have been made since the last inspection. Accommodation and resources are now of a high standard. The school is successful in identifying key areas for improvement. However, targets set for overall school improvement, couched in terms of success criteria, are insufficiently measurable or focused on pupils' learning outcomes.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage of the school is outstanding. Rigorous assessment processes prior to the pupils' admission mean that the school is well prepared and provides the correct levels of support and specialist resources from the outset. Targets are set accurately within individual education plans (IEPs), and there is strong evidence that many pupils make much better than expected progress. Teaching and learning are consistently good or better across Foundation Stage classes, due to effective planning, the excellent learning environment and high levels of staff skills and expertise. Management of the Foundation Stage is very effective.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure pupils with relatively higher levels of ability have sufficient challenge to build on skills already learned.
- Set measurable targets for overall school improvement with a closer focus on pupils' learning outcomes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school with standards well below those expected of children their age. Because of this standards compared with national averages are low. However, pupils make good progress through the school and outstanding progress within the Foundation Stage. They make particularly good progress in their personal and social development. Pupils with very severe medical and complex needs make impressive strides in their communication and independence skills. They succeed in performing tasks which they find very challenging, such as feeding themselves or communicating their own needs and wants effectively. The school has worked hard to improve the quality of target-setting since the previous inspection, enabling pupils to make better progress. Assessment processes are very effective and successfully identify pupils' needs to ensure learning targets are set appropriately. Progress made by individual pupils is carefully monitored with a recently introduced computer tracking system. Actions taken to improve the progress made by different groups of pupils analysed as underachieving in 2005–06 have been effective.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy their time at school and make excellent progress in their social and cultural skills through the outstanding variety of social, cultural and physical activities available to them. Pupils' awareness of other religions and cultures is raised and moral and social skills are enhanced through activities relevant and meaningful to their life experiences. For example, during the inspection some pupils learnt social and caring skills through role-play about a visit to the doctor. The school has very effective links with other schools and local community groups. Pupils greatly benefit from their involvement in various projects including the recent development of drama activities through the creative partnerships. Pupils also develop skills important to their quality of life such as making choices, and improving their independence. Many pupils' behaviour improves because of the high priority and clear focus given to its effective management by staff. Pupils are involved in the life of the school wherever possible and practical. They take on school responsibilities such as errands and have had an input into the design of the new school building.

Pupils' health and well-being is given a high priority due to the many complex medical conditions and physical disabilities pupils have. The school excels at ensuring pupils' needs are met through the expertise of the multi-disciplinary specialist support staff on site. The school is rightly proud of its healthy school award, and, through its outstanding support services, monitors pupils' eating closely, especially those pupils with particular difficulties in eating unaided. Attendance is closely monitored which results in improvements for some pupils. However, overall rates of attendance are affected by the medical conditions of many of the pupils; taking these factors into consideration it is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers make lessons interesting and enjoyable by making use of different teaching methods and resources including information and communication technology (ICT). Relationships between

staff and pupils are excellent, and any inappropriate behaviour is well managed within lessons. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' progress is of a good quality and used effectively in the development of learning. Lessons are mostly planned very well with work set at different levels to meet the needs of the pupils. On occasions, pupils who are more able are not always suitably challenged. Much attention is appropriately paid to developing pupils' listening and communication skills within lessons. There are very good examples of signing and the use of visual, communication aids and symbols. However, not all teaching and support staff practise signing consistently enough. Teaching and learning are particularly strong within the Foundation Stage.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to the school's success. It provides a wide range and quality of subjects and activities organised to meet the needs of pupils with a wide range of very complex needs and disabilities. The curriculum continues to develop and is under constant review to ensure its appropriateness and suitability. Curriculum activities are closely linked to pupils' achievement of targets contained within their IEPs. Provision is especially good for literacy, including speaking and listening, numeracy and ICT.

The curriculum promotes well pupils' enjoyment in learning and healthy lifestyles. This is enhanced by the out of school activities, including residential visits, and the numerous visitors to the school, including representatives from local employers and religious and community groups. Lunchtime and after school clubs provide very good opportunities for social development, as do links with local mainstream schools. The excellent outdoor play areas and on-site pool offer pupils opportunities for their physical development, and break times and part of lunchtime are given over to supervised play activities for their enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff are highly committed and work closely together in promoting the health and welfare of pupils. There are very well thought out systems in place to ensure all pupils are treated with respect and dignity. For example, special consideration is given to pupils who need to be fed by tube, by providing a separate feeding room and highly experienced and trained staff to enable this to be done. Pupils' learning is greatly enhanced by the excellent on-site specialist multi-disciplinary support team. They work closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure appropriate resources are obtained and treatment plans are devised which contain highly valuable information. Teaching and support staff use these plans very effectively to ensure pupils' needs are met. Plans are closely linked to IEP targets so that progress is closely monitored and reviewed. Behaviour plans are developed with full involvement of all interested parties and contain essential information about the strategies and preventative measures that enable pupils to learn well. Parents feel the school provides excellent support to pupils within a safe and caring environment. There are appropriate measures for safeguarding pupils and rigorous attention is given to health and safety issues.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Management is effective. The monitoring processes and procedures are being well implemented and have started to have a positive impact on pupils' progress. The senior management team have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement through their self-evaluation processes. All staff are involved in the development and evaluation of the school improvement plan. However, evidence to substantiate some of the judgements made about the quality of provision is not sufficiently focused on outcomes for pupils. Appropriate actions are identified within school improvement planning, and are being successfully implemented resulting in significant improvements being made to the quality of provision. However, targets contained within improvement planning lack measurable outcomes.

The headteacher and her senior colleagues provide excellent leadership that is clearly focused on meeting the needs of pupils with very complex needs. Excellent relationships exist between senior managers and staff members. Staff feel empowered and as a result are enthusiastic and motivated to surmount the difficulties associated with meeting the needs of the most needy and vulnerable pupils. They value the training opportunities and support given by managers in their personal development and training. Teaching areas are extensively equipped and provide an outstanding learning environment for pupils. There is a weekly parent support group held within the school and very close links are fostered with parents.

The governing body has improved since the previous inspection. Governors are now well informed through effective reporting procedures and provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge. Equal opportunities are promoted well, and much work has been done to improve communication with parents from minority ethnic backgrounds. However, work still needs to be done in the evaluation of pupils' progress to ensure pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other groups.

The school takes a leading role in improving inclusion opportunities within the local authority and is highly regarded for its outreach provision and partnership work with local schools.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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	2
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

21 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Orchard School, Olbury, B68 8LD

As you know, we recently visited your school to find out how well you are doing. Thank you for making us feel welcome. We enjoyed our visit and learned a lot about the school.

The Orchard School is a good school. Some things are outstanding. Here are some of the things we liked:

- You make good progress, and excellent progress in your personal development. Your behaviour is outstanding.
- The lessons are good and the things you take part in, such as trips out, residential and out of school clubs, all help you to learn the social skills you will need in your future lives.
- The care, support and guidance you receive are outstanding.
- The headteacher, managers and all the staff work hard to make sure you do well.

We think two things could be made a bit better:

- A few of you should do harder work.
- The plans the school leaders make to improve the school should have clearer targets.

I would like to wish you lots of success for all that you do in the future.

Yours sincerely

Kath Smith Her Majesty's Inspector



21 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Orchard School, Olbury, B68 8LD

As you know, we recently visited your school to find out how well you are doing. Thank you for making us feel welcome. We enjoyed our visit and learned a lot about the school.

The Orchard School is a good school. Some things are outstanding. Here are some of the things we liked:

- You make good progress, and excellent progress in your personal development. Your behaviour is outstanding.
- The lessons are good and the things you take part in, such as trips out, residential and out of school clubs, all help you to learn the social skills you will need in your future lives.
- The care, support and guidance you receive are outstanding.
- The headteacher, managers and all the staff work hard to make sure you do well.

We think two things could be made a bit better:

- A few of you should do harder work.
- The plans the school leaders make to improve the school should have clearer targets.

I would like to wish you lots of success for all that you do in the future.

Yours sincerely

Kath Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector