

Cherry Trees School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124516
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328153
Inspection date	20 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	25
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Carr
Headteacher	Christine Eccleston
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Giggetty Lane Wombourne Wolverhampton WV5 0AX
Telephone number	01902 894484
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school provides for pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties. A high proportion of them have additional difficulties such as autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The pupils are drawn from a wide area of Staffordshire. All the pupils are of White British heritage. There are many more boys than girls.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, which has outstanding features in terms of the pupils' excellent personal development and in the care and support they receive. Because of their learning difficulties, the standards reached by pupils remain below those normally expected. However, all pupils, including those with autism, make generally good progress. There are effective strategies to support the pupils with autism in their communication and social development and these enable them to overcome the additional barriers to their learning. The very few pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in all areas of their development.

Lessons are interesting and well paced. Literacy and numeracy are taught well with good use of national strategies. This adds rigour to the teaching. The pupils enjoy their lessons and respond by trying their best. Teachers know their pupils well. Lessons are well planned and this prepares the way for teachers and teaching assistants to give high quality support to the pupils. One of the major strengths of the school is the detailed way in which each aspect of the pupils' progress and development is assessed and recorded. This results in targets and activities which are generally well matched to the pupils' ability. This has a positive impact on their confidence and motivation to learn. However, occasionally, teachers do not always use the assessment information to the best advantage and learning targets and resulting classroom activities are not always challenging enough, particularly for the higher ability pupils. This can sometimes slow down the pace of learning.

The curriculum is effectively adapted to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with autism. Teachers are skilled in making good use of a range of effective techniques involving visual cues and signs and symbols to enable these pupils to work without confusion or frustration and thus to make equally good progress. The good curriculum provision is enriched by the varied opportunities to interact with the community and by the effective programmes in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Pupils thrive in the caring ethos of the school. They feel safe and well supported and this is evident through the very good relationships they have with staff, who in turn manage the pupils' behaviour very well. Their personal development is outstanding because, for example, in this area, teachers have the highest expectations of their pupils' achievement. The pupils learn how to be healthy, to keep safe and gradually to take responsibility for their own conduct. The pupils attend very regularly. They love coming to school and parents are, without exception, pleased for their children to attend, knowing they are happy and are making good progress. As one parent commented, 'The teaching staff care about every child and strive to see every child fulfil their potential.'

School leaders have improved several important aspects of provision since the previous inspection. The curriculum has significantly improved in information and communication technology (ICT) and in the range of educational visits into the community. Senior staff are aware, however, that there is still room for improvement in the way leaders analyse assessment information to establish a clear overview of the pupils' progress. The governing body is supportive of the school and provides a good standard of strategic leadership. The acting headteacher, although in post for only a few weeks, has a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development. She has ensured that staff and governors continue to evaluate the school's work effectively and to plan for further improvement. This indicates that with the

expertise and enthusiasm of teachers and other staff, the school has a good capacity to build further on the progress made since the previous inspection.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The very few children of this age make good progress because the staff know them very well and demonstrate this by their effective planning and teaching, tailored to the needs of each individual. The assessment and recording of the children's achievements is well managed and thorough and this makes a significant contribution to their progress. The children are encouraged to develop their communication skills through the effective use of symbols and signing. They receive a high level of individual attention from caring and competent support staff and there are good relationships with parents and professional agencies. As a result, the children make outstanding progress in their personal development. This provides a good basis for their future success in the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement further by using assessment more effectively to set suitably challenging learning targets for all pupils.
- Analyse and evaluate information about pupils' academic progress to gain a clear overview of their achievements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The rate of pupils' progress has improved since the previous inspection. This is because of improvements in teaching and in the recording of the pupils' performance. Although their attainment remains far below that which is expected in mainstream schools, most of the pupils are making good progress and a few have done exceptionally well. However, teachers sometimes do not have high enough expectations of their higher ability pupils and this occasionally prevents them doing even better. All the pupils achieve well in learning basic skills and their progress in ICT has significantly improved since the previous inspection. Pupils with autism make very good progress in meeting challenging targets in communication and personal development and this has a strong impact on their academic success.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' excellent progress in personal development reflects the school's strong emphasis on moral and social values. Pupils respond to its clear rules and as a result, they develop very good attitudes to learning. This helps to ensure they make good progress. Pupils feel very safe and confident and know what is expected of them within the school's calm and supportive atmosphere. They respond by behaving extremely well. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. For example, pupils demonstrate very caring friendships and show concern for the welfare of all the other children. The pupils enjoy and help to maintain a happy and close family atmosphere. Pupils love to celebrate each other's achievements in displays and assemblies. As a result, the pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of community cohesion. They contribute productively to the school community by relating very well to adults and each other. The pupils gradually develop a strong awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles through the many opportunities to take part in physical activity and their

clear understanding of the importance of healthy eating. For instance, they enjoy their school dinners and look forward to the healthy options. The pupils make good progress in basic skills and communication and this helps them to thrive when they leave to go onto secondary school. Pupils greatly enjoy their learning and the company of other pupils. The pupils are emphatic that they feel free from bullying or unpleasantness and that they really look forward to coming to school. This is confirmed by their very regular attendance. The high percentage of parents who returned questionnaires praised the school for its positive impact on their children's lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers know pupils very well and this enables them to plan interesting well-paced lessons. The teachers have very effective procedures to assess and measure progress, but occasionally do not use this information effectively enough to set really challenging targets, particularly for the most able. Teaching standards, however, are good throughout the school as a result of the effective monitoring by the senior team. Pupils gain confidence to learn new things, effectively assisted by the high level of individual tuition they receive from well-trained teaching assistants. Teachers and support staff are skilled in establishing very good strategies for supporting individual pupils in developing their communication skills. These are particularly effective in developing the confidence and motivation of pupils with autism. Teachers manage the pupils' behaviour very well. They create a clear and consistent structure to lessons so that their classrooms are orderly and calm places of learning. This has a significant impact on raising the pupils' achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy a carefully constructed, broad and balanced curriculum, which is well adapted to their individual needs. The high levels of support for those with additional difficulties ensures that all pupils have equal access to learning opportunities. The very good provision for the development of pupils' personal skills has a significant impact on their achievement. For instance, there are many colourful displays around the school which demonstrate the pupils' good knowledge and understanding of healthy lifestyles, keeping themselves safe and the value and enjoyment to be gained from becoming involved in community events. The school's excellent procedures to develop pupils' communication, together with good programmes in basic literacy and numeracy skills, are effective both in promoting their confidence and supporting learning in other subjects. There is a developing range of activities to enrich the pupils' learning experiences and to take them out of the classroom, enabling them to learn new things in different situations. For example, older pupils have made exciting and interesting visits to Stafford to learn about the Tudors and to the Black Country Museum to learn more about the Victorians.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's highest priority is to provide the best standards of care and support for all of its pupils. The success of this is clearly demonstrated in the pupils' happy and relaxed behaviour. Safeguarding procedures exceed national expectations. The pupils benefit from the way that

staff consistently make clear to them how well they are doing in both their work and their personal development. As a result, they have more confidence in their efforts and have an excellent understanding of how to make their work better. This has a very positive impact on their achievement. Parents report a high degree of satisfaction with their level of involvement in their children's education. The school's procedures to ease the pupils' transition to secondary school are very effective. Pupils visit regularly before they transfer and, as a result of the effective assessment procedures, teachers are able to pass on useful information to the secondary school to ensure their pupils get off to a good start.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management have enabled the school to maintain consistent improvement on the provision found at the previous inspection. The acting headteacher, who is an experienced senior leader at the school, has maintained the pace of improvement. She has the respect of all the school's staff. There are effective procedures to measure and improve staff performance. Communication within the school is excellent. The staff feel fully consulted, involved and valued. The high level of their professional training has been planned well to focus on the needs of the pupils, especially in strategies to manage their behaviour and to support the communication of pupils with autism. Effective planning is ensuring that pupils have a good grasp of community cohesion. Senior staff ensure that all pupils are fully included in every activity and this has a strong impact on removing the barriers to their learning.

Leaders evaluate the school's work effectively. For instance, they know that procedures to monitor the pupils' progress could be improved and they are working to correct this. Governors provide good support to the school; they work closely with individual staff and they effectively monitor the school's strengths and areas for development. The communication between home and school is well organised and parents are actively encouraged to be involved with their child's education.

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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?	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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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 learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

21 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cherry Trees School, Wolverhampton WV5 0AX

Not long ago, we came to the school to see how you were getting on and whether we could suggest anything to make the school better. You made us very welcome and we enjoyed meeting you in the classrooms, at lunchtime and in a meeting. We could see that you all enjoy school very much. Cherry Trees is a good school. These are some of the good things we found.

- You work hard and make good progress in your work.
- You are doing really well in learning to look after yourselves and learning how to get on with different people and your behaviour is very good.
- Your teachers and other adults at the school look after and support you very well.
- You look after each other very well.
- Your headteacher runs the school well. Everyone else, including your parents, gives her good support.

I think the school could improve even further if:

- all the little bits of information about how you are getting on were used to help some of you to make even better progress
- all those little bits of information were to be looked at really carefully to make sure you are all doing as well as you can.

You can help, of course, by continuing to work as hard as you do now!

Best wishes to you all.

Yours faithfully

Melvyn Blackband Lead inspector