

Selly Oak Trust School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103613
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	355408
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	382
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Reynolds
Headteacher	Diane Drain (Acting headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2008
School address	Oak Tree Lane Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6HZ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors who observed 26 lessons, taught by 25 different teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, representatives of the governing body and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work, looked at information about students' progress, staff and student surveys and safeguarding procedures, and analysed 119 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- What are the differences in the rates of progress for students of differing abilities in English and mathematics?
- How appropriate is the provision for students with highly specific needs, such as those with autistic spectrum disorders or social and communication difficulties?
- How effective and accurate is the school's self-evaluation, conducted by senior leaders, in identifying and driving improvements in key areas?

Information about the school

This is a much larger than average special school. Almost 50% of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The majority of students are of White British origin with just over a third from other ethnic groups mostly of Asian origin. Almost a fifth do not speak English as their first language. All students have a statement for special educational needs. For just over a third the primary difficulty is moderate learning difficulties, often with associated complex difficulties and/or disabilities. Broadly 25% have primary autistic spectrum disorders and another 25% have speech language and communication difficulties. The remainder have either, emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, severe learning difficulties or sensory impairment as their primary special need. A few are looked after by the local authority. The school has a specialist science status recently re-designated. As a trust school, the school is a charitable foundation in partnership with the Midlands Co-operative Society. The sixth form consists of six classes taught in separate buildings on the same site. The acting headteacher and other members of the leadership team took over in January 2011.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Students make good progress and achieve well because teaching and the curriculum are effective in helping them to be well prepared for the future and to gain many relevant skills and qualifications. Students' personal skills are also good. The school is a welcoming and harmonious community, appreciated by parents and carers, where pupils and staff feel valued. Students enjoy school and act in a mature fashion around the building and in lessons.

There are variations in the progress being made: for example, progress in English is satisfactory overall with those of average ability often making slow progress in this subject. However, progress is good in mathematics and outstanding in science and information and communication technology (ICT). More-able students and those with the most severe learning difficulties are now progressing well. The science specialism has had a positive impact on outcomes, raising attainment not only in science but more recently in mathematics, as a more practical approach to teaching has involved and engaged students more effectively. In English some of the teaching strategies used are not in line with current, nationally accepted practices, which are known to be effective. The school has also identified that the qualifications provided in English are insufficient to meet the needs of the full range of students' abilities.

In most lessons students work hard, behave well and are engaged by interesting activities which help them all make good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a good understanding of students' levels of attainment and so are able to build on their skills effectively. In lessons where progress is satisfactory rather than good, lesson objectives and student targets are not precise or individual enough to secure enough progress for every student in the group. This is particularly evident in English lessons for those of average ability. The science specialism has supported students' good contribution to the community where, for example, they have helped to support local primary school pupils in science, promoting fitness and in data handling. The specialism has also enhanced links in supporting students with learning difficulties in partner secondary schools and adult horticulture in the evenings.

Leaders and managers have secured several improvements to outcomes for students since the last inspection and so the progress they make has moved from satisfactory to good overall. There has, in particular, been a successful focus on increasing the number of qualifications taught and on supporting better progress for the more able. The capacity to improve is therefore good. A whole-staff, team approach to improvement is not yet firmly established though and not all leaders are fully accountable for outcomes in their areas of responsibility. The senior leadership team has identified that the school's traditional leadership structure is not always efficient in tackling new needs quickly enough. For example, staff skills are not well developed in using specialised approaches with the

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increasing number of students with more complex needs. The acting headteacher has acted swiftly to begin to tackle any shortcomings, based upon an accurate self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Rapid change to processes and provision is underway, building on past success, which is supported enthusiastically by staff and is driving further improvement well.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate of progress being made in English, particularly for students of average ability by:
 - developing a literacy strategy which is in line with current nationally accepted practices which are known to be effective
 - providing qualifications in English which fully meet the broader range of students' abilities
 - ensuring that lesson objectives and individual student targets are precise enough to secure enough progress for every student in the group.
- Strengthen the capacity of leadership to respond to new areas for improvement more quickly by:
 - ensuring that all leaders are made accountable for outcomes
 - enabling staff across the school to work more closely as a team
 - reviewing and revising the structure of leadership within the school.
- Improve specialised approaches towards students with more complex needs by investing in staff development as a matter of some urgency.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Students enjoy learning and achieve well because they approach lessons with a sense of purpose and an attitude of wanting to do their best. For example, one parent explained, 'My child has had a very happy experience and has grown with confidence and knowledge, enjoying all aspects of the curriculum.' Although progress is good overall, in English it is satisfactory because the qualifications provided do not always present enough challenge, particularly for those of average ability. Students' speaking and listening skills though are developed well in English. In several lessons students, many of whom struggle with communication, were confident to express their views and enjoyed taking part in debate. Students with English as an additional language and those with autistic spectrum disorders make good progress overall. In mathematics, the good progress made has improved recently, following closer working with the science specialism and a greater emphasis on applying mathematics to everyday situations. In one lesson, for example, some students excelled themselves in knowing how to read statistical information from a survey that had been conducted and were in line to attain good GCSE grades. The outstanding progress made in science and ICT results in most students achieving GCSE or equivalent to a challenging level. In science, for example, 91% of students met or exceeded their challenging targets and over a third of those entered gained GCSE grade C or D. Students achieve a wide range of up to nine or more qualifications each, including GCSEs and entry levels. Almost all go on to further education, training or employment.

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Students act responsibly and take good care of the school environment. They feel safe, although there is still unkindness on the playground from a few. The high quality, popular school lunches and well attended sporting opportunities demonstrate that students have a good awareness of how to lead healthy lives. In preparing well for the future students develop many skills, including working in teams to organise events, providing skilled technical support at performances and demonstrating leadership by acting as sports leaders in local schools. They also reflect thoughtfully about events in the world and take a keen interest in the lives and customs of people from different cultures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In sixth form schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have an accurate view of students' levels of attainment and so most lessons take their learning forward well. This is largely because classes are streamed by ability and so lessons are appropriately organised to meet the attainment levels of the students in the group. However, not all lessons are planned with the precision necessary to make sure that each individual student makes as much progress as they can. This is why the work occasionally lacks challenge for some. This particularly affects those in the average ability groups, especially in English but sometimes in other subjects. Technology is used effectively to make ideas clearer, particularly in science and mathematics lessons. The

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increasing variety of activities in lessons is appreciated by students who feel more involved in their learning. Teaching skills are less well developed in providing for those with complex needs, such as autistic spectrum and other social or communication difficulties; a concern shared by a small number of parents and carers. These students usually make good progress, but their sense of well-being in lessons and in public spaces around the school, is occasionally adversely affected. The good, extensive curriculum includes well-organised, work-related learning and is enriched well through strong effective links with other schools and organisations. For example, the Selly Oak Trust business partner lends valued expertise, particularly in supporting mathematics, science and economic and financial well-being. In English, the courses provided and methods used are not always effective enough and lack the strengths observed in current strategies used elsewhere. Students are well prepared to move smoothly from one key stage to another and on into the sixth form. Effective procedures to support vulnerable students and those looked after by the local authority are rigorous. Steps taken to encourage good attendance are not yet fully effective, although the school has now put many well-regarded initiatives in place.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership team's vision and ambition for the school is shared by staff and, building on earlier good work, the drive for improvement is effective. For example, more students are reaching the higher National Curriculum levels and less able students are provided for more effectively. The school's accurate self-evaluation is based upon an increasingly robust evidence base. Nevertheless, departments have not traditionally worked closely together towards school improvement and accountability for outcomes, at all levels, has not been specific enough. Senior leaders have also identified that the current leadership structure no longer effectively supports the full breadth of school improvement necessary. This has meant that some areas have developed more slowly, as with the limited staff development to meet the challenges of a changing student population. There has, however, been an increasing amount of good teaching, especially in science and mathematics, and most targets, including the science specialism targets, have been met or exceeded. The governing body ensures that statutory requirements are met and have a skilled understanding of how to support further improvement by evaluating and challenging outcomes in the school.

The school's engagement with parents and carers is satisfactory. It has been strengthened by termly meetings to review students' progress against their targets, which parents and carers appreciate. Attendance by parents and carers is high at the regular events held. Equal opportunities are a core value of the school and there is no evidence of any

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discrimination. The majority of groups now make equally good progress, despite the fact that some of those students with more complex learning difficulties are not always supported in lessons in the most effective way. The procedures to safeguard students are robust and thorough; they are regularly reviewed by governors and monitored carefully by staff. Strong procedures to promote community cohesion include a thriving international dimension as well as good national and local links. These ensure that students develop respect and understanding for people who are different to themselves and that the wider community respects the contribution made by pupils of the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Staff know the students extremely well, based upon an accurate assessment of their progress. Students like to contribute fully in lessons, which are strongly work and life skills-related. The atmosphere in lessons is relaxed and students are confident to make their views heard. Good progress is evident, especially in English, mathematics and ICT. Students make particularly good progress in speaking and reading skills which underpin much of their success in gaining qualifications. There is no significant difference in the good progress of students of differing abilities or for those with significantly more complex needs. The way students are supportive of each other contributes to the mature and relaxed atmosphere in lessons. Teaching is varied and well paced so that students are enthusiastic and engaged in their activities. Good, challenging, sensitive questioning helps students to extend their thinking skills effectively. The curriculum is imaginative and relevant to a wide range of different needs, particularly in vocational studies. In one horticultural session, students evidently enjoyed preparing compost and planting seeds while they reflected thoughtfully on what they were learning. The use of assessment to support every student in securing more rapid progress is less well developed. As in the main school, individual next steps in learning based upon each

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student's prior learning are not sufficiently explicit. Good leadership has established appropriate priorities for improvement and has secured continued good progress for pupils both personally and academically.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are positive about all aspects of the school. As one typically commented, 'My son has high self-esteem and is having success in reaching his full potential and having all his needs met.' Parents and carers particularly like how much their children enjoy school, how safe their children are and the quality of teaching and leadership. A few concerns were expressed, largely about the way concerns are followed up and the information received about their children's progress. The school is aware of this and is seeking ways to improve the information parents and carers receive about their children's progress and the way it responds to parental concerns. The concerns expressed by a very few parents and carers regarding how well the school provides for students with more complex needs, such as autistic spectrum and other social and communication disorders, are evaluated in the report. The inspection team findings are similar to the strengths and weaknesses expressed in these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Selly Oak Trust School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 119 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 382 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	44	56	47	9	8	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	66	55	43	36	9	8	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	51	43	55	46	9	8	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	48	41	55	47	11	9	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	53	45	53	45	6	5	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	47	40	56	47	12	10	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	41	56	47	9	8	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	44	38	54	47	8	7	5	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	41	56	47	7	6	4	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	52	44	52	44	7	6	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	37	55	47	11	9	6	5
The school is led and managed effectively	49	42	57	49	7	6	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	59	50	48	41	6	5	3	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



3 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Selly Oak Trust School, Birmingham, B29 6HZ

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons. Yours is a good school. There are many interesting things going on, just as you described. Senior staff work hard to keep developing the school and this is an important reason why your work is getting better.

Enjoyable teaching helps you to make good progress in your lessons and we like the way you always try to do your best. To help this continue we have asked your school to help some of you make faster progress in English, and to ensure that school leaders are well placed to help your school keep improving. We would particularly like to see you being given:

- clearer steps in lessons to help each of you move forward at your own pace
- more choice in the qualifications you study for in English
- some new ways to help you learn how to read and write.

We would also like to see teachers receiving more support in the way they help some of you whose needs are complicated. We are sure that you will discuss these ideas with your teachers and help them by working hard and sharing your thoughts.

The many responsibilities that you take on, such as helping local primary school pupils, running the library and sitting on the school council are heartening. You were keen to tell us that the school keeps you safe and looks after you well. It is therefore very pleasing to see that you usually behave well, although we think that sometimes a few of you are not as kind as you should be to others, especially on the playground. You show good respect and understanding towards those who have different beliefs and ways of living, which helps make your school a happy and welcoming community.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Potheary

Lead inspector

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