

Orrets Meadow School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105140
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377182
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2012
Lead inspector	Brian Padgett HMI

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Bourne
Acting Headteacher	Morag Kophamel
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Brian Padgett
Paul Edmondson

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They saw nine teachers teach. Meetings were held with parents, groups of pupils, governors, a representative of the local authority and staff. The inspection team received information about the school's partnerships with secondary schools by email and telephone. Inspectors observed the school at work and looked at pupils' exercise books and a range of documentation, including that on safeguarding and pupils' progress. The results of questionnaire returns from staff and pupils were analysed, along with 49 responses from the parents' questionnaire.

Information about the school

Orrets Meadow is a community special school for pupils of primary-school age with specific learning difficulties. Admissions to the school are controlled by the local authority. Most of the pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Their specific learning difficulties include dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit, dyscalculia, Aspergers Syndrome and autism. About three-quarters of pupils have at least one additional learning difficulty, such as social, emotional and behavioural difficulty and/or speech, language or communication difficulties. Twenty-seven of the Year 4 pupils attend the school for one year as part of a new pilot programme aimed at raising the literacy skills of the lowest-attaining pupils in the authority. These pupils, whose special educational needs are identified at the school action plus stage, are admitted on the basis of their reading and writing performance at the end of Key Stage 1.

Most pupils enter the school during Year 4 or Year 5 and stay for an average of seven terms. Most then transfer to mainstream secondary schools. However, some pupils are at the school for a longer or shorter period and a minority transfer to other special schools when they leave Orrets Meadow. A few return to mainstream primary schools. Occasionally, a pupil will spend his or her Year 3 or 7 at the school.

Many pupils, nearly a half, are known to be eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are boys and almost all are of White British heritage.

Since the previous inspection the school has been led by an acting headteacher, nominally for three days each week. She is also the headteacher of a nearby primary school.

The school has Healthy School status and the Basic Skills Quality Award.

The school is the base for Orrets Meadow Services, which provides outreach, training, assessment and advice services for pupils and students with specific learning difficulties within Wirral schools. This service was not inspected.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- Orrets Meadow is an outstanding school that is extremely successful in providing for pupils who are experiencing difficulty with their reading and writing. In the relatively short time pupils are at the school they make remarkable progress in their reading, writing and mathematics. Moreover, they grow in confidence and in self-belief and, by Year 6, they are in a strong position to succeed at secondary school. Parents and carers think extremely highly of what the school achieves and how it involves them.
- Teaching is of the highest quality and is never less than consistently good. Teachers are expert in teaching reading and writing. Staff in general are extremely effective in encouraging pupils' personal development, leading to outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Building on existing success, there is scope to enhance pupils' learning even further by encouraging them to make a bigger contribution to lessons.
- The rules covering the admission of pupils to the school have changed since the previous inspection. Exceptional leadership by the acting headteacher and her team has ensured the school has adapted very successfully to the increase in the range and complexity of pupils' learning needs and to ensuring a very effective start for the Year 4 pilot programme. The curriculum is very well designed to meet pupils' needs and is of excellent quality. The performance of staff is monitored very thoroughly and the school has developed an outstanding capacity to sustain excellence.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and for most, very good. Pupils feel very safe at the school and have exceptional confidence in their teachers. The admission of pupils with additional social, emotional and behavioural difficulties has caused the school to develop strategies to support such pupils. Good progress is being made but there is some improvement needed to eradicate occasional disruption to lessons. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is high, above that for mainstream primary schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop strategies to help pupils with additional social, emotional and behavioural difficulties manage their behaviour in order to maximise their learning and avoid disrupting the learning of others.
- Increase the proportion of teaching judged outstanding through the greater involvement of pupils by, where appropriate, encouraging pupils to make a bigger contribution to lessons, to work cooperatively with other pupils and to be given more choices in their work.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment in basic skills that are low for their age, frequently several years below that of their peers. For pupils on the Year 4 pilot, attainment in reading and writing is among the lowest within the local authority at the end of Key Stage 1, at age seven. All pupils, regardless of their starting points and their additional special educational needs, make outstanding progress. For example, pupils on the Year 4 pilot have, on average, already made 17 months improvement in their reading age from September. Their parents are delighted. Pupils' progress in lessons was never less than good. They responded well to the precision teaching of literacy. Pupils admitted to Orrets Meadow in Years 4, 5 and 6 with statements of special educational needs also make remarkable progress. Their progress exceeds that for pupils with statements generally, regularly being within the top 25% of such pupils nationally. So much progress is made in learning the basic skills that, despite the relatively short time pupils spend at the school, they frequently exceed the progress expected of all pupils across the whole of Key Stage 2. Although most pupils remain slightly below the average in reading by the time they leave the school, nearly all have the necessary basic skills to cope with the demands of secondary schooling successfully. A minority attain the national expectation of Level 4 of the National Curriculum in English and mathematics. Of equal importance to the school, parents and the receiving secondary schools is the growth in pupils' confidence and self-esteem. From being pupils who are reluctant to try they become pupils who are keen to have a go. For example, Year 6 pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties persevered exceptionally well to complete the end of Key Stage 2 tests, including challenging reading assignments, independently.

Quality of teaching

Teachers are expert teachers of reading and writing, with a deep knowledge of teaching literacy to pupils with specific learning difficulties that has built-up over many years. The morning sessions are devoted to the systematic teaching of basic skills, including the development of speaking and listening, using a wide variety of strategies to interest and engage pupils, such as through games and competitions. All aspects of literacy and numeracy are taught precisely and consistently and backed

up by homework. Expectations are high and this can be seen in pupils' exercise books, where pupils' work is very well presented and marked. Teachers call on an excellent range of resources. They make very good use of technology, using interactive whiteboards, and pupils frequently use laptops, for example, to research topics. As a special school, there is a high level of individual support for pupils and teaching assistants play a very important role in class and about school, particularly during small group work when teachers plan to meet pupils' additional special educational needs. Pastoral care is excellent and this is another aspect of the work of the school where teaching assistants make a major contribution.

Outstanding relationships are a keynote for the school, quickly established. Pupils and parents and carers recorded 100% faith in the quality of teaching in questionnaires. Praise and celebration of achievement occurs frequently. Rigorous assessment of the progress of individual pupils enables teachers to set ambitious and realistic targets for pupils and they are very adept at ensuring pupils and their parents and carers are well-informed about next steps.

The quality of teaching observed was never less than good. Just occasionally, teachers missed opportunities for some pupils, whose confidence was high, to play a larger part in lessons, whether in reading for others, for example, or in playing a lead role in managing a task.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All parents and carers responding to the parents' questionnaire felt their children were safe at school. Virtually all the pupils felt safe. Behaviour is very good. Pupils enjoy school and show care and respect for each other. They do not feel bullied in any way and they have innate trust in the teachers to help them should they require it. Pupils have a clear and developing sense of right, wrong and fairness. As the school has admitted a growing proportion of pupils with specific conditions, such as attention deficit and autism, and as more pupils have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties as additional needs, managing pupils' behaviour and helping pupils manage their own behaviour have become more important. Pupils and their parents and carers acknowledge occasional disruption of learning in lessons. The school is working hard and successfully to become more expert in this aspect of the school's work, including by working closely with a partner special school for pupils with behavioural difficulties. It has a clearly understood set of rewards and sanctions. Nevertheless, as evidenced by a small number of fixed-term exclusions, school leaders acknowledge that further progress is needed and they have developed plans of good quality to achieve this.

Attendance is very good, above the average for mainstream primary schools and well above that for special schools. Punctuality is excellent, as the vast majority of pupils arrive by school bus.

Leadership and management

The learning needs of pupils have changed significantly since the previous inspection as the introduction of new criteria has opened admission to pupils with more complex additional needs. Also, the Year 4 literacy pilot has introduced a complete new cohort of pupils to Orrets Meadow. When the long-serving headteacher retired nearly three years ago, the governing body was unable to recruit a permanent replacement. Working with the local authority, the governing body was successful in

securing the part-time appointment of a headteacher from a nearby primary school as acting headteacher. It is to the great credit of the school, particularly to the acting headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior staff that, despite such challenging circumstances, the school has gone from strength to strength, meeting every new challenge with success. By the very nature of the pupils' outstanding achievement the school plays an important role in promoting equality, narrowing the gap in achievement between these pupils and others, and tackling discrimination. The existing strengths of the teaching recorded by the previous inspection have been maintained and developed further to meet the more complex needs of pupils entering the school. Staff performance management and professional development have contributed to the school's improvement. School self-evaluation and the tracking of performance are very rigorous. Staff are committed to the school and keen to take on leadership roles. Leadership is distributed effectively at all levels. The governing body commands an impressive range of expertise and experience and has good parent representation. It is well-informed.

The arrangements for safeguarding are rigorous and are of the highest quality. The curriculum is outstanding and exceptionally well designed to meet the pupils' learning needs. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. As a consequence, despite unpromising starts to their primary education, pupils are well-equipped with excellent attitudes and values for secondary education and, indeed, for life.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



16 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Orrets Meadow School, Wirral, CH46 9QQ

You may recall when inspectors from Ofsted spent two days in your school. It was the week when the Year 6 pupils were doing their national test papers in English and mathematics, the SATs. I am writing to you to tell you how we judged your school. First, I must thank you for your help. We learned a lot about the school from watching you in lessons, reading your questionnaire returns and from talking to you.

All of you come to Orrets Meadow because you were having difficulty learning to read and write in your local primary schools. As reading and writing are so important for your future it is really important you catch up. That is exactly what you do. You make truly remarkable progress in reading, writing and mathematics. We also saw how much you grew in confidence because you are learning so well. Your exercise books had writing of high quality that you can be proud of.

The reasons behind your success are straightforward enough to understand although hard to achieve. You are taught by expert teachers of reading and writing in a school where all the staff work extremely hard to make sure you are safe and well cared for. They give you back your confidence. Also, your school is exceptionally well led and run by Mrs Kophamel and her team of leaders and managers, each committed to making the school even better.

We were able to help, by making two recommendations. The first is for teachers to let you, the pupils, make a bigger contribution to lessons, to give you more opportunities to have your say and show what you are capable of. We can only suggest this if you are already learning really well and already show a strong sense of responsibility. The second is for staff to become even more expert in helping those few pupils who find managing their behaviour difficult. Although your parents and carers were 100% behind the school, they, and some of you, worried occasionally that lessons were sometimes disrupted.

Most of you will leave to go onto secondary high schools. We know from talking to those schools that Orrets Meadow pupils do well there and put their new skills and confidence to good use. That was no surprise to us.

Good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector

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