

The Old Park School

Thorns Road, Brierley Hill, DY5 2JY

Inspection dates 25–26 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Excellent leadership by the headteacher and senior team has ensured that Old Park provides an outstanding education for its pupils.
- The very high expectations of the governing body and staff ensure that the school is continually striving to improve.
- Teaching is outstanding because staff know their pupils extremely well and plan their lessons very carefully to meet the needs of each pupil.
- The exceptional recording of how well each pupil is doing and the identification of the next steps in learning mean that pupils' skills are developed in a very systematic way.
- The very good communication skills of the staff help pupils to make outstanding progress in literacy and numeracy.
- The curriculum is very effective in providing pupils with an excellent range of experiences and does much to support their outstanding personal development.
- Behaviour is excellent and the school's very safe and positive environment does much to enhance pupils' love of learning.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students make excellent progress and develop a wide range of skills that prepare them very well for life when they leave school.
- The very small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes make good and occasionally outstanding progress. However, the recording of their progress is not yet consistently effective in helping staff to plan activities that ensure all children make the best possible progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors saw 12 lessons or parts of lessons. All but two of the lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also carried out a 'learning walk', observing sixth-form provision with the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account the 11 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors looked at: the school's records on pupils' progress; its development plan; records on behaviour, bullying and attendance; policies for safety and child protection; and records of governing body meetings. They also looked at pupils' books and their folders of work.
- They also considered the 26 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Sarah Mascal, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Lawley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Old Park School caters for pupils with complex needs, including severe and profound learning difficulties. Many have communication and language disorders and autistic spectrum disorder. All of the pupils are educated on the one site.
- All pupils have statement of special educational needs.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. About a fifth are from Pakistani origins. A larger than average number of pupils do not speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium (the extra money provided by the government to support certain groups, such as those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils in the care of the local authority) is higher than average.
- At the time of the inspection there were a very small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the systems for recording the progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are used effectively by all staff to support their planning, so that all children are helped to make excellent progress in their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils start school with very low attainment because of their complex needs. They make outstanding progress because the work set is matched very carefully to their individual needs.
- Excellent planning by teachers ensures that all groups make similar progress, including those with different special educational needs and boys and girls. Pupils from heritages other than White British and those who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as their classmates. The very high level of care and support ensures that those with the most complex medical needs are able to learn and make excellent progress.
- Pupils supported by pupil premium funding have benefited from carefully allocated spending that has supported them to make excellent progress in their communication, literacy and numeracy skills.
- The excellent range of information the school uses to monitor pupils' progress shows that a high proportion exceed national expectations, particularly in mathematics. Staff set very challenging targets and do not hesitate to extend these further to ensure all pupils, including the most able, make the best possible progress. In lessons and in pupils' books it is very evident that pupils achieve very well. Pupils clearly enjoy their learning and concentrate for long periods of time.
- Students make excellent progress in developing their communication skills because staff use objects of reference, signing and communication aids consistently well. Staff are skilled at identifying and watching pupils for the slightest gesture or movement that will indicate a preference or response to stimulus.
- Pupils make excellent progress in reading because staff use a range of strategies to support them. They encourage pupils to read symbols and follow signing. A gifted and talented reading group helps the most able pupils to make increased levels of progress.
- Students in the sixth form gain passes in accredited courses and make excellent progress in developing skills for life. They are enthusiastic learners, eager to get to the computer for ICT (information and communication technology) or rushing to get ready for a visit. In an English lesson they were keen to identify heroes and villains in films and enjoyed mimicking 'baddies' such as Darth Vader. Last year all students went on to college or training when they left school.
- The progress made by the very small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good overall. For some it is outstanding because the work they do always builds on their skills. Occasionally the way staff record their skills and use the results is not effective, so opportunities are occasionally missed to make sure children's skills are developed systematically.
- The outdoor and sports facilities are used very well to support pupils' physical well-being. All make excellent progress in learning to swim. The impact of using the extra funding for sports development for coaches and specialist staff is already enabling pupils to participate more in a larger range of clubs, both in and after school.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Much teaching is outstanding because teachers have very high expectations of themselves and their pupils. Because of this, pupils' achievements are excellent.
- Excellent assessment and recording systems identify the different levels pupils are working at. This information is used extremely well by most teachers in their planning to make sure the work is matched to each individual pupil and supports their next steps in learning. This aspect of education for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been a weakness but is now improving.
- Work in pupils' books confirms that they enjoy a variety of experiences, which are very well organised and thought through. Lessons are lively and interesting and very good use is made of the excellent resources and space in and around the school. As a result pupils take great pleasure in their learning and are actively involved in all that goes on.
- Teaching assistants provide excellent care and support for learning. Their interventions reflect their very good knowledge and understanding of each pupil's individual needs. They use their initiative and are very effective at recording when pupils have made any progress, no matter how small. When moving pupils around the school staff maintain a continuous dialogue with the pupil, making sure they know where they are and where they are going.
- Teachers ensure that pupils and other staff are very aware of the purpose of each lesson as well as the individual targets for each pupil. As a result, staff are clear about the outcomes for the pupils and are well focused on supporting pupils to achieve their targets.
- Teaching in the sixth form is planned very well to ensure students have real-life experiences that prepare them for life after school. Staff are very well organised and very clear about their roles in supporting students, particularly when, for example, they go out to shop for the meal they are making.
- Teamwork in the Early Years Foundation Stage is very good. Staff are very knowledgeable in working with children, particularly those with the most complex needs. In a sensory session, staff worked one to each child and provided them with a range of experiences. When one child showed real pleasure in being stroked with a paper fan the member of staff continued with the activity, recording the child's very good responses.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour in and around the school is excellent because of the staff's consistently very high expectations. Pupils arrive cheerful and happy every morning and their clear enjoyment of school is evident throughout the day. Staff provide very good role models, showing considerable respect and politeness to pupils.
- Behaviour in lessons is excellent and pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy opportunities to work together, either in pairs or in groups. For some this is quite an achievement and even at a very young age some will work together when, for example, playing outside in the sand or with water.
- On the very rare occasions where behaviour is inappropriate pupils, respond quickly to staff intervention. Pupils clearly value the very good range of rewards they can gain. Staff have also adapted rewards for individuals. To encourage one pupil to sit still and not interrupt he is

rewarded with a marble. The pupil was very proud of his marble jar and the fact that he had already collected three marbles by 9.30 in the morning!

- Parents were overwhelmingly positive, both in Parent View and the school's own questionnaires. They say that behaviour is very good and that their children are kept safe. There are very few incidents of bullying and to date there have been no permanent exclusions at the school.
- Attendance is above average for the vast majority of pupils. For a very small group of pupils attendance is low because of their severe medical needs.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leadership and management are excellent because the drive and ambition of senior leaders ensure that pupils will achieve to the best of their ability. There is a real sense of 'team' within the school where every individual is valued.
- Systems for checking all aspects of the school's work are extremely rigorous. Leaders and managers at all levels are very much involved in checking the effectiveness of their areas of responsibility. As a result, for example, the issue regarding recording in Reception had already been identified earlier in the term and remedial action had been taken. Senior leaders are very accurate in their analysis of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and use effective procedures to support any underperformance.
- The checks on pupils' progress and setting of targets are excellent. Very close attention is paid to tracking pupils and ensuring they are going to meet their targets. Where necessary these are reviewed and extended if it is felt they could be even more challenging.
- Self-evaluation and improvement planning are closely entwined. The resulting planning document is very coherent and reflects the school's considerable capacity to continue to improve.
- New leadership of the sixth form is driving the curriculum to bring about an even wider range of accreditation and extend work experience placements. Good leadership of Reception has led to the development of a well-resourced facility and ensured that quick action is being taken to address the identified weaknesses.
- The excellent curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities that involve and inspire pupils. As a result they are active learners who clearly value all the experiences they are given. Literacy and numeracy are promoted very well throughout the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well promoted throughout the curriculum and opportunities such as assemblies are used very well to develop pupils' understanding of these aspects.
- Links with parents and carers are very good, and the school and governors have done much to involve parents and the local community in the life of the school. The school organises training for parents and carers, for example on how their child communicates.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body fulfils its role in both supporting and challenging the school very well. Regular visits, detailed reports from senior leaders and regular presentations, particularly about pupils' progress, keep it very well informed. Governors are quick to challenge senior leaders to ensure pupils are making the best possible progress. They regularly check the work of senior leaders and other staff to inform decisions about any training and pay.

Governors have ensured that national requirements are fully met, including those relating to safeguarding procedures and practices.

- The finance committee is particularly rigorous in ensuring that the impact of spending is clear. For example, it checks closely on the achievement of pupils who receive pupil premium funding, which has been used to invest in tablet computers for pupils and to extend speech and language therapy. The impact on pupils' progress in communication, literacy and numeracy is very evident in their excellent progress. Plans have been established and investment already made for a number of initiatives linked to funding for enhancing pupils' physical well-being, including bringing in specialist sports staff to run clubs.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	103880
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	427112

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	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rita Tonks
Headteacher	Gill Cartwright
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2010
Telephone number	01384 818905
Fax number	01384 818906
Email address	office1@old-park.dudley.sch.uk

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