

# Inspection of Cherry Tree School

72 Queen Mary Street, Palfrey, Walsall, West Midlands WS1 4AB

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Inspection dates: 3 to 5 December 2024

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Early years provision

**Outstanding**

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**Yes**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Cherry Tree School is an extremely welcoming school, where staff have very positive relationships with the pupils and their families. Families and pupils quickly learn to trust that the staff will do all they can to support them. As a result, pupils are happy and feel safe here. They settle down to the routines of school life remarkably quickly.

The school is determined to enable pupils to thrive. Pupils, many of whom have often struggled in other settings, learn the highly ambitious curriculum. They gain the important skills they need now and to prepare them for their future lives. For example, pupils with limited or no means of communication rapidly acquire skills to express their needs. Many of these pupils quickly start using spoken language for the very first time.

Pupils care deeply about each other and want to learn. Those pupils whose challenging behaviour has previously got in the way of learning learn how to behave well in many different settings. They are highly attentive and engaged in lessons, and their behaviour in this school is exemplary.

Giving pupils highly motivating and unique experiences is at the heart of everything this school does. Attendance is excellent because pupils love coming to this school.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school leaders, including the proprietor body, have set a clear and concise vision that is understood by all staff. They are determined that this school will give all pupils the best possible start or a fresh start in their education. This vision is consistently realised for all pupils regardless of their special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The proprietor body has an excellent understanding of what is happening in the school. This is because it makes regular and thorough checks. It consistently ensures that the school meets the independent school standards. The proprietor body also ensures that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

The curriculum is exceptionally broad and ambitious. The school has given a great deal of thought about what its pupils need to learn when designing the curriculum. This curriculum starts in the early years class and goes to key stage 5. It has ensured that every subject has the same level of detailed curriculum thinking and development. This includes a bespoke programme for the individual pupils within the careers curriculum.

All staff members receive extensive support, training and coaching. This enables them to expertly lead and confidently deliver the curriculum. Teachers adapt the

curriculum so that lessons precisely match the specific needs of pupils. They help pupils to practise using the new knowledge and skills in lots of different situations. The school uses several strategies to check how well pupils remember new knowledge and skills over time. For example, pupils take an active part in checking their learning through 'flashback' activities at the start of each lesson. Staff use this information effectively to identify and address any emerging knowledge gaps and misconceptions. As a result, pupils make very strong progress through the curriculum and are proud of their achievements.

Teaching pupils to read, developing their love of reading and widening their vocabulary is everyone's responsibility in this school. There are many opportunities for staff to hear and teach pupils to read throughout the school day. The school implements a highly structured and effective approach to teaching phonics. All staff have received extensive training in the teaching and assessment of reading. They ensure that they check what is going well weekly. Pupils who need extra support get the help that they need. Staff know how to support pupils from the earliest stages of reading. Pupils enjoy books, and many make excellent progress through the reading curriculum. Many pupils become confident and fluent readers.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development is woven into everything this school does. It prepares pupils to be responsible and valued members of society. It achieves this by carefully deciding what opportunities and experiences it wants its pupils to have. The school has put systems in place to ensure that all pupils take part in these opportunities. For example, the 'Cherry Tree 50' is a range of visits and experiences that all pupils will do.

'Take-out therapy' is the school's unique approach to developing pupils' interests and talents. Therapy includes sessions with a music specialist and a hobby teacher. They creatively explore different hobbies and interests with pupils. Every pupil has at least one of these sessions a week.

Pupils are taught how to make appropriate friendships. For the youngest children, this starts by playing alongside each other. Older pupils are taught how to have safe relationships online. All pupils are taught about the differences and similarities across different faiths and cultures. Pupils really enjoy the school's fundamental British values song. The song helps them remember and understand some of the more complex vocabulary they are learning.

The school is very conscious that it needs to support staff well-being. It has established many ways of doing this. The staff appreciate this and are overwhelmingly positive about working at this school. Because staff are well looked after and supported, they are calm and resilient when faced with any challenging behaviours. They are consistent in implementing the behaviour strategies. As a result, pupils rapidly learn appropriate ways of behaving.

Working closely with parents and carers is an integral part of the school's work. It is determined to have a positive impact on the lives that pupils have with their families. Families greatly value this support and are extremely positive about how

the school has helped them and their children. For example, some parents say that their children's behaviour at home improves significantly.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## School details

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 149910   |
| <b>DfE registration number</b>             | 335/6003   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Walsall  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10342208   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Other independent special school   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Independent special school   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3 to 19  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 40   |
| <b>Number of part-time pupils</b>          | 0  |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                          | Hopedale Children and Family Services Ltd  |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Sarah Deaville   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Kelly Butler   |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>            | £56,344 to £90,937   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 0192 2662 2460   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.cherrytreeschool.org.uk/">www.cherrytreeschool.org.uk/</a>     |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | <a href="mailto:office@cherrytreeschool.org.uk">office@cherrytreeschool.org.uk</a> |

## Information about this school

- The school operates from an urban area near the centre of Walsall.
- The school provides education for pupils with the following special educational needs: autism, severe learning difficulties or social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils will have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is registered to cater for boys and girls aged three to 19. Currently, there are no key stage 5 students attending the school.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the proprietor body, members of the critical friends board, the executive headteacher, the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education, and personal, social, health and economic education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects. They observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including school policies, attendance information and governors' minutes.

- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the staff survey and spoke to a number of parents.

### **Inspection team**

Amanda Green, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Russell Hinton

Ofsted Inspector

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