



# Cherry Oak School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 103626  
**LEA** Birmingham  
**Inspection number** 276961  
**Inspection dates** 19 January 2006 to 19 January 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mick Megee AI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	60 Frederick Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Birmingham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		West Midlands B29 6PB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 4642037
<b>Number on roll</b>	33	<b>Fax number</b>	0121 4645219
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr. Philip Lowe
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11 September 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Lesley Fowler

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 19 January 2006 - 19 January 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 276961
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

Cherry Oak is a small, day special school for pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties, which serves Selly Oak and surrounding districts within the City of Birmingham. About three quarters of the pupils are boys. Many come from families in difficult circumstances. Many different ethnic groups are represented among the pupils, although half are from White British backgrounds. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. Eight pupils have a home language that is not English.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The school provides an effective education, outstanding quality of care and support and good value for money. The school's strengths lie in the way it places the welfare, care and social development of the pupils at the heart of all its work.

The school judges itself to be a good school; the inspection shows that this judgement is correct. The headteacher and her deputy lead the school effectively to ensure that good progress is maintained and that all staff work hard to ensure that all pupils do well. The school makes good use of its assessment procedures to track individual pupils' progress but the information could be even more effectively used to identify whether any group of pupils is less successful.

When children enter the school, they are performing at a level well below that expected for their age. Although they make good progress while at Cherry Oak, they are still below the average when they leave. Children have a good start in the Foundation Stage and this sets them up well for the rest of their education. The pupils benefit from good teaching which, together with the caring assistance from support staff, ensures that everyone makes good progress in all subjects except science, where achievement is satisfactory but improving. A few teachers do not make consistently effective use of signing and symbols to assist pupils' language and understanding. All pupils make excellent progress in their personal development, and the care and support they receive is exceptional.

There are increasing good opportunities for the pupils to attend mainstream schools. The good curriculum provides an interesting range of activities and good opportunities to learn, although there are currently no after-school activities. The governing body is effective and knows the school well. The commitment shown by all staff ensures that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve teachers' planning and practice in science.
- Ensure that all staff consistently use signing to assist pupils' understanding and language development.
- Improve the tracking of achievement of different groups, especially the less able and minority ethnic pupils, to ensure progress is consistently good.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

All pupils are performing below the standards expected for their age when they enter Cherry Oak, and this remains the case throughout their time at the school. This is because of their significant learning difficulties. Once in school, the pupils, including those in the Foundation Stage, make good progress in most subjects as a result of effective teaching. Progress in science is satisfactory, rather than good, but the school has recently revised the way in which the subject is taught in order to achieve the necessary improvement.

Parents say that the pupils make much better progress than they had expected. One wrote that progress is good because '...the staff are very perceptive to the development and needs of each child and try many different ways of teaching them and helping them'. The school sets realistic learning targets for each pupil, and nearly all pupils are successful in achieving these goals.

There are no discernible differences in the performance of girls and boys, those with additional difficulties such as autism, or in the different year groups. The school has about a third of its pupils attending lessons in mainstream schools, and pupils make good progress there as well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They take great pleasure in their school, attend well and do their best in lessons. They are happy, polite and respectful to staff, and show considerable kindness and thoughtfulness to each other. They pay careful attention and show a very positive attitude to learning. For example, they are not easily discouraged if they do not get their answers right the first time. This resilience comes from the very close, caring relationships that the staff maintain and the wholehearted encouragement they give.

At lunchtime, the pupils relax and enjoy each other's company, chatting away and occasionally giving help to one another where needed. Out in the playground, pupils play happily together, sharing equipment and games, and there is absolutely no nastiness or bullying. These examples show that moral and social development is outstanding.

The school has focused slightly less on spiritual and cultural development, but these aspects are still good. Pupils gain spiritual insight through regular circle time and assemblies, and awareness of their own and others' cultures through musical and artistic events such as the forthcoming visits from music graduates, and from the artists who are assisting them in 'Mud Day'. Pupils speak exuberantly about being in the school, and clearly feel very happy and safe. Through their focus groups pupils contribute to what is happening in the school. Pupils' economic well-being is being effectively addressed by the improvements in their basic skills. The school has recently gained the important Healthy School Award. Through this initiative, as well as the very good personal, social and health education programme, the school makes certain that any health concerns are very well addressed. Pupils are well known in the local community where they show kindness and consideration, for example during their regular visits to a local care home.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning in the school, including that in the Foundation Stage, is good, particularly in personal social and health education. Planning is well structured to ensure that pupils experience success in their learning, and the assessment procedures are thorough. Teaching in science has been less effective, but the school has taken effective steps, especially in improving planning and teaching, to remedy the past weakness.

Relationships between staff and pupils are courteous and considerate, with a good deal of banter on both sides. The effective and caring support staff, small groups, and good number of adults in the classroom mean that pupils receive a lot of gentle individual encouragement and work hard. There is good use of interactive whiteboards throughout the school to give exciting visual learning experiences.

A few staff do not consistently use signing in order to make their meaning clear, and some of the symbolised notices are confusing and not well thought out.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum, including that in the Foundation Stage, is of good quality, having at its heart the development of pupils' social skills. This is achieved by having a very well planned personal, social and health programme woven through the timetable. At the same time, pupils learn and strengthen their basic skills well. All staff have a good understanding of pupils' individual communication, numeracy and social targets and the school has established an efficient system, which should ensure that these basic skills are continually consolidated. There are educational visits to places in the local community and further afield, including residential experiences, which enrich the curriculum effectively. However, since the external funding ceased, there are no longer daily clubs or activities available after school. This is a current shortcoming for the pupils although the school hopes to restore these activities as soon as the resources become available. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to attend lessons in mainstream schools, which have a good impact on the progress they are making.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils, including the children in the Foundation Stage, are outstanding. The school is very effective in ensuring that there are watertight arrangements to safeguard pupils, such as risk assessments, police checks on staff and child protection procedures. Each pupil has an individual programme with specific and well chosen targets, which are regularly agreed and reviewed with parents, carers and where possible, pupils.

Parents have a very a clear picture of the rate of progress pupils are making in developing their academic and social skills and whether this could be improved. There are good arrangements for preparing pupils for moving on to the next stage of their education. The guidance given to pupils about their work is effective in helping them to make good progress. The school has established very positive relationships with parents, with a mutual diary and food diary in daily use. In response to the inspection questionnaire, parents wrote the following glowing comments: 'The staff are always quick and eager to answer any questions of fears we have'; 'Staff always make time for a chat'; and 'This is an amazing school with incredible staff'.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is well led and effectively managed. The headteacher and deputy provide good leadership for the staff team. The senior managers work to each other's strengths, have a clear vision of how the school can keep improving and motivate the staff to make it happen. This good quality leadership has enabled the school community to maintain and develop the good progress recorded at the last inspection.

The school has a well planned approach to finding out the views of parents, staff, pupils and other relevant agencies about its work. This means it has a good understanding of what it does well and what could be improved upon. All school developments are focused on meeting the learning needs of pupils. The school gathers a good range of information which is used well in checking pupils' individual progress. What the school does not yet do, is examine its individual data more closely to check on the progress as a whole of each minority ethnic or disabled group. The school has a good capacity to keep on improving its provision and effectiveness, as shown by the strong leadership it gives to the local inclusion initiative. This work also demonstrates the healthy links it has fostered with local mainstream schools to the benefit of the pupils. Governors know the school very well and are extremely supportive. The governing body uses its finances well and is prudently keeping back a sum in the budget as a hedge against a possible reduction in funding next year.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Cherry Oak School 60 Frederick Road Selly Oak Birmingham B29 6PB

20 January 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for being so helpful to me when I visited your school. I enjoyed the time I spent with you and I can see why you are so happy at school. I enjoyed meeting your teachers and seeing your work.

There are many good things in your school:

- you get on very well with the staff, and learn quickly
- you behave very well and work hard in lessons
- you are very kind to your friends, and you help each other without being asked
- your teachers and assistants have your interests at heart and make sure you are safe
- you show your kindness to the people in the care home when you take them the cakes you have made.

These things could be even better:

- your teachers should help you learn even faster in science
- all your teachers should help you to understand what they mean by signing all the time and using clear symbols.

Perhaps you could help by continuing to do your best. I wish you all the very best in the future.

Dr Mick Megee (Lead inspector)