



Forest Oak School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104132
LEA Solihull
Inspection number 277080
Inspection dates 6 February 2006 to 6 February 2006
Reporting inspector Denise Morris AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Lanchester Way
School category	Community special		Birmingham
Age range of pupils	5 to 16		West Midlands B36 9LF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01217 483 411
Number on roll	91	Fax number	01217 497 534
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Ann Hunt
Date of previous inspection	1 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Alison Murkin

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Forest Oak School is a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Pupils' primary additional needs are linked to their language difficulties, and a few also have social, emotional and behavioural problems, autism or attention deficit disorders. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and their attainment on entry is well below the expected levels. More than half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school caters for pupils from an area of high deprivation. The school is relocating shortly to a new community campus, which will include a secondary school, and another special school. The school has had a complete change of management, including the headteacher, over the past two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that gives good value for money. This judgement accords with the school's own view. The school has improved considerably since its last inspection. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. They get off to a good start in Years 1 and 2 and make good progress towards their targets. As they move through the school they continue to achieve well academically. This results in all pupils passing a good range of examinations by the time they leave. Achievement in mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT), and physical education is particularly strong. However pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to use their ICT skills across other subjects.

Teaching is good throughout the school. Pupils benefit from the good range of learning opportunities and some exciting extra-curricular experiences. Assessment is good overall. Relationships are very good.

Pupils are extremely well cared for and the way in which the school caters for their individual learning and personal needs is very good. This leads to good behaviour by all pupils, including those with challenging behavioural difficulties. Attendance is satisfactory, and has improved over the past few years.

The leadership and management of the school are good. There are many strong features in the way the school is led and managed, including the creation of an atmosphere of care, support and respect, which pervades all aspects of school life. The school has a good knowledge of where it is at. There are effective links with outside agencies and with parents. Governors are supportive and fully involved in monitoring. Financial management is good.

The school is well placed to improve further. The school has successfully tackled the weaknesses noted at the time of the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills to support their learning in other subjects.
- Continue to work with carers, parents and support workers to improve attendance further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement has improved since the last inspection and is now good. All pupils, including those with additional needs, make good progress. Systems to measure how well they are achieving are in place and are used effectively to show how well pupils are progressing as they move through the school. Pupils across the school achieve well in their academic studies and in their personal development. By the end of Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve well in accredited qualifications such as the Asdan Bronze Award and entry level certificates. There is no significant difference in the achievement of

different groups of pupils. Speaking skills are good, and, as a result, pupils talk clearly and appropriately to adults. They generally listen well to others and to their teachers. Most learners make good progress in their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils have too few opportunities to use their ICT skills as they study other subjects.

Pupils make good progress as they move through Years 1 and 2, attaining their targets well. By Year 6, they show particularly good achievement in mathematics, and in physical education. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 continue to achieve well, often benefiting from the good use of resources. In a history lesson in Year 9, for example, pupils were absorbed by the good visual resources, which included evocative photographs of life in the trenches in World War 1. They showed high levels of empathy, awe and wonder as they described what they saw.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils are very positive about their school and say they really enjoy being there. They show very high levels of enthusiasm about their learning, and have extremely positive relationships with staff. 'Teachers always make time for you', commented one pupil. As a result, pupils feel safe and have the confidence to do well. Behaviour is good and is supported by a strongly individualised approach for those pupils who find learning challenging. For example, a 'Focused Learning Programme' is giving outstanding support to a small minority of pupils with behavioural difficulties. As a result, these pupils are able to participate in the learning opportunities available to them. Pupils show respect and consideration for others, and work well together. They know that racism and bullying will not be tolerated. They comment that any bullying is quickly dealt with. Pupils know the value of healthy eating through managing and running their own healthy tuck shop. They understand how important it is to take regular exercise.

Attendance is satisfactory and the school is working very closely with other agencies to improve this further. Pupils are given very good opportunities to make a positive contribution and influence school life, and their views are taken into account. For example, when older pupils requested more appropriate reading material, research was undertaken to find books appropriate to their abilities and maturity. They also had the opportunity to put forward proposals and ideas for the new school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection. This is particularly so for pupils in Years 10 and 11 where it was judged unsatisfactory at that time.

Staff know their pupils well. They know what each pupil needs to learn next, because they regularly assess how well they are doing and set specific targets for improvement. Pupils with additional needs are well taught and benefit from good support from teachers and learning support assistants so that they learn at their own pace.

A positive environment for learning has been established in all areas of the school. Pupils understand when it is time to work, and they respond well. The best lessons are those in which the teachers' questioning extends pupils' thinking skills, challenging them to find answers. In general, pupils have too few opportunities to use ICT in lessons. The quality of marking and assessment is good. Pupils are fully aware of their own targets and have a clear understanding of how to improve their own learning. They benefit from the way in which teacher's plan different tasks to meet individual needs. Parents and carers play a positive role in supporting the work of the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of the different learners well. It has improved considerably since the last inspection, most significantly in Years 10 and 11. There is now a good range of options for older pupils, including accredited courses in the core subjects as well as subjects such as Spanish and travel and tourism. All the planning for what is to be taught in most subjects has been amended and is now good, although further work is necessary in ICT, humanities and religious education.

The curriculum supports the development of life skills well, preparing pupils effectively for the next stage of education and for life after school. Good opportunities are created to enable pupils to develop enterprise and financial skills and to work as part of a team. A good programme of work experience enhances opportunities for older pupils to learn about life at work. Pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills well but do not make sufficient use of their ICT skills. Physical education is a strong area of the curriculum. The range of sporting options is particularly good, providing many opportunities for pupils to improve their physical health. The curriculum is effectively enriched by a wide range of visits, residential trips and clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. There are outstanding systems for identifying pupils with different special needs and for ensuring that they have the appropriate support. This is exemplified in the high quality 'Rest and Relaxation Programme'. Staff are very caring and committed; 'They are always there', quoted one pupil. They are vigilant and the strong pastoral ethos is good. Child protection and health and safety procedures are rigorous and understood by all staff. The school is proactive in engaging the support of the health service, the local authority support services and the educational psychology service. High quality help is always available to ensure that pupils develop their self-esteem and confidence, often from a low starting point. The school is active in encouraging healthy lifestyles, such as the introduction of healthy snacks at break times. The school sets challenging targets,

which pupils fully understand. Good support is provided to help pupils improve their attendance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and have improved considerably since the last inspection. The new management structure is having a positive impact on all areas of school life, and senior staff are setting a good clear direction for future developments. The effective, corporate approach ensures that the whole school community is fully involved in determining the direction and priorities for further development. This approach is new and has had insufficient time to become fully embedded in practice. The leadership team has put in place good procedures to inform them precisely how well the school is doing. The quality of education has improved because many new procedures and practices have been introduced; a few of which have not yet become fully embedded in practice.

The headteacher and the management team are very enthusiastic about their roles. They have created an atmosphere in which pupils feel valued, and where care, support and respect pervade all aspects of school life. This is evident in the good quality displays of pupils' past work, which celebrates their achievements. Leaders work hard to ensure that all pupils are fully included in school life. As a result, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are good, and they are exceptionally well cared for and supported.

The school analyses data well. This is exemplified by the way in which they identified a weakness in comprehension skills in Years 3 to 6. The introduction of a remediation programme has resulted in good improvement. The tracking of pupils' achievements is effective in providing a picture of individual progress over time.

Governors support the school well and are appropriately involved in monitoring how well the school is performing. As a result, they are beginning to have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Financial management is good, and is effective in prioritising needs. Staffing is good and staff are well deployed to meet pupils' individual needs. The school is well placed to improve further.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	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

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for your help during the recent inspection of your school. It was very nice to meet you all, and I particularly enjoyed talking to you and watching your lessons.

We found your school to be a good school. We were particularly impressed with your good behaviour and the way in which you enjoy your lessons. You told us that 'teachers are helpful' and we agree with you.

You have good teachers and you learn well. The good curriculum gives you lots of exciting things to do. We particularly enjoyed looking at all the displays of your work around the school, showing that you take part in many exciting activities both in school and on visits. The headteacher and senior staff lead and manage the school well and ensure that you receive good care and are well looked after.

There are a few things that your school needs to do to improve even further:

make sure that you use your ICT skills more, particularly in other subjects

continue to work closely with your parents, carers and local support workers to make sure that you come to school every day. You can help with this.