



Orrets Meadow School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105140
LEA Wirral
Inspection number 277303
Inspection dates 7 June 2006 to 8 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Frances Gander CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Chapelhill Road
School category	Community special		Moreton
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		Wirral, Merseyside CH46 9QQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 6788070
Number on roll	66	Fax number	0151 6774663
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr B Bourne
Date of previous inspection	10 January 2000	Headteacher	Mrs S Blythe

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Orrets Meadow School provides full-time education for 66 pupils between the ages of 7 and 11 years who have specific learning difficulties. All have been placed in the school by the local authority (LA) and have a statement of special educational need. Many have learning difficulties and/or disabilities including speech and language or coordination problems. A few pupils are autistic or have Asperger's Syndrome or some degree of emotional or behaviour difficulty. Pupils' attainment levels when they start at the school are below those expected for pupils of a similar age. There are currently 66 pupils in the school but numbers fluctuate because pupils are admitted throughout the year. The school usually has spare capacity in September but fills up throughout the year. Many pupils are admitted during Years 5 or 6 and consequently there are many more pupils in Year 6 than in other years. The average length of attendance is seven terms.

During the last three years, changes have taken place to the role the school plays within the LA. It now also provides part-time education for pupils in primary schools across the authority. These have been identified as needing a specialised teaching approach, mainly in literacy, but also sometimes in numeracy, and in small class groups. Some of these pupils have already received support from the school's outreach service. There are 22 pupils attending part-time, as well as 175 pupils in primary and secondary schools who are supported by the outreach team. As mainstream schools pay for both of these services, the demand for places or support is unpredictable and varies from term to term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. The school is overly modest in almost all areas of its self-evaluation. It is a highly effective establishment where pupils make considerable progress in a short time. This is unanimously the view of parents. This is a school where the standards achieved and the progress pupils make place it, year on year, nationally in the highest category in comparison to similar schools. Pupils' self-esteem is promoted very well so that they become more willing learners who enjoy school. The pupils themselves confirm this. Teaching is outstanding and the school provides a wealth of relevant and exciting learning experiences. The teamwork between all adults is seamless and their high expectations enable most pupils to transfer or return to mainstream education successfully.

The staff make very good use of the information gained from monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school. As a result, the school has been able to remain a high achieving school while responding to the changes and challenges of a wide range of uncertainties such as the unpredictable range of pupils' needs, the number of pupils it receives and finances available. Areas for improvement in the last inspection have been addressed, but more regular attendance of governors at committee meetings remains an area for further improvement. The school demonstrates that it is very able to continue improving, providing high quality education and being successful. Given the complexities and uncertainties facing the school, it offers exceptional value for money by providing such high quality provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Find ways to encourage governors to increase their attendance at committee meetings and involve them more in gaining better awareness of the quality of the school's provision and sustaining its future success.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and much better than the school's self-evaluation. Pupils who attend full-time have previously not made any progress in reading, writing or spelling since the end of Year 2 tests, in which they attained below average for pupils of a similar age. Once they start at the school and are taught in smaller class groups by experienced teachers they make very fast progress. For some of the pupils it means that their reading and spelling ages increase by at least one chronological year in one term. This is usually the first measurable gain they have made in a long time. For pupils who have the longest time in the school, the successes are exceptional. Some of these pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 tests reach the average levels expected for children of a similar age. The success rate of pupils transferring back into mainstream education is very high; only very occasionally does a pupil move to a special school at secondary transfer. The school's contribution to educational inclusion is therefore highly effective. Most part-time pupils attend, unusually, each morning for two terms and they, too,

make outstanding progress. This is because the sessions are tailored to the priority needs of these pupils and are tightly organised with all staff playing a major role in working with individuals or groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

These areas are outstanding and this is also the view of all parents. The attention given to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. It permeates all aspects of the school so that pupils have a great awareness of moral issues, such as justice and fairness. For example, during an assembly they sensibly suggest which world events or people close to them should be remembered in their prayers and thoughts. Relationships between pupils are a strength. This is particularly commendable given that all pupils, whether part-time or full-time come from different educational experiences, routines, and expectations. They welcome new pupils coming into their classes. Pupils who were still fairly new to the school at the time of the inspection spoke of how older pupils helped them overcome their fears. Behaviour and attitudes are excellent, both in lessons and in the playground. The excellent and imaginative range of outdoor resources, with plenty of seating areas and playground games has a particularly positive effect on this. The older pupils have played a major part in this by writing to governors for an activity area. Pupils say they really enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average for special schools. They respond positively by taking care and respecting the building and the resources. They are very aware of health, safety and environmental issues, and are active in recycling and growing plants and vegetables in their environmental area.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. The strengths are clearly identified in the school's self-evaluation and it has addressed the perceived weakness in teaching identified at the time of the last inspection. As a result, the pace of lessons has increased so that pupils are extremely attentive, motivated and enjoy learning. The decision to install interactive whiteboards in each classroom has been an excellent investment and particularly beneficial to learning, but this is also because all teachers are using them confidently and extremely effectively in all subjects. The teachers have a high level of experience and expertise in addressing the learning needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties. The school has broadened the expertise of staff so that they can understand and address the more complex needs of pupils. Staff have benefited from specific training, and confidently address the learning needs of those with Asperger's Syndrome or behaviour difficulties, for example. Staff are consistently friendly but firm in their management of behaviour. They use praise when needed and there is clear communication of expectations. A particular strength which contributes to the overall progress pupils make is the seamless teamwork between teachers and

teaching assistants, the latter showing a high level of ability. Assessment is used very well to show progress pupils make from when they enter the school until they leave. The new format of tracking and showing progress has made it easy to monitor how well each pupil is doing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It is broad and balanced with great attention given to organisation and planning. This ensures that the school has the necessary flexibility to respond to an increase in numbers, the reorganisation of class groups throughout the year and, as far as possible, in addressing the different educational experiences of the pupils. There is a high and appropriate emphasis on literacy skills but this is not at the expense of other subjects. Work displayed around the school shows high expectations and achievements in other subjects, such as in art, geography and information and communication technology (ICT). Very good emphasis is placed on common themes running through different subjects, such as drawing on pupils' knowledge from their history topic of Second World War in the teaching of English. The curriculum is supported by an extensive range of resources, including those in the two ICT rooms. Although space is at a premium in the school, every area is used very effectively. For example, all classrooms have small areas where pupils can be taught individually. There is a very good range of extra-curricular and community activities, including coached sporting activities at lunchtime.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The inspection agrees with the school's self-evaluation of outstanding. The school provides an atmosphere of trust where pupils feel they know who to turn to if they need help. High levels of staffing ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for. It is well ordered and routines are consistent. Bullying and racism are not tolerated and pupils' health and well-being are very important to the school. This helps the pupils focus on learning and achievement so that they improve their prospects for their future economic well-being. The monitoring of progress through the targets in the individual education plans (IEPs) is simple but very effective. Targets appropriately focus on the priority needs of each pupil. Very regular monitoring of progress against targets allows the school to know how well each pupil is doing. The school benefits from its close association with the outreach service so that pupils' needs are well known if they are placed in the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school was modest when judging leadership and management. It is outstanding and this is echoed by all parents. Many written comments submitted during the inspection stated that the school was outstanding and that it had changed the lives

of their children forever. The headteacher and senior staff have provided a very clear vision for the school. It has ensured a unified and coordinated approach to tackling change and challenge, as well as providing a more diverse range of provision. The changes have been carefully managed and all staff are committed to their success. The outreach service and the provision for part-time pupils are very well led and managed. Outstanding leadership and management have enabled very high quality educational provision to be maintained despite the uncertainties which face the school at all times. Although governors provide good support, their involvement and attendance at committee meetings is erratic and sometimes, therefore, their understanding of how well the school is doing is less than it should be.

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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?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	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	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	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	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

As you know, I visited your school recently to find out how well your teachers were helping you with your learning and your personal development.

Thank you for being very friendly, polite, extremely well behaved and willing to talk to me. It was very useful to know what you thought about how you are getting on and what you liked.

I agree with your parents that you attend a wonderful school. What really impressed me was:

- how much you enjoy the lessons and activities that the teachers plan for you
- how well you are taught and the excellent progress you are making in your work
- how hard you try to get on well with everyone, especially when pupils are new at the school
- how you look after your school and the interest you show in making it an attractive place to come to
- how well your headteacher and teachers know you and ensure that you attend a safe and attractive school.

I felt that to further help you in your studies, the school needed to make sure that more of the governors attended meetings.

I hope you carry on enjoying what you are doing and continue to help your teachers all you can.