



Cherry Trees School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124516
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281738
Inspection dates 12 July 2006 to 12 July 2006
Reporting inspector Alan Dobbins AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Giggetty Lane
School category	Community special		Wombourne
Age range of pupils	2 to 19		Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV5 0AX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01902 894484
Number on roll	35	Fax number	01902 894484
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs S J Dunphy
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2000	Headteacher	Mrs L J Allman

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
2 to 19	12 July 2006 - 12 July 2006	281738

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an all-age school, that is smaller than most, for pupils with learning difficulties that range from mild to severe. A high proportion of pupils have autistic spectrum disorders. The school provides specialist provision for a wide area of Staffordshire that includes Rugeley, Stafford and Cannock. All but two pupils have statements of special educational needs, and these two pupils are being assessed for a statement. As an outcome of the local authority's (LA) review of provision for pupils with special educational needs, the school has been redesignated as a primary special school, beginning September 2006. Secondary-age pupils are currently spending their last term at the school and will start at a new school in September. There have been changes to the senior staff since the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Cherry Trees School is a satisfactory school that provides satisfactory value for money. This judgement differs from the school's view of itself as good. The school holds this different view because it does not yet analyse or use its information about pupils' progress well enough to gauge its academic effectiveness. Nevertheless, it is a caring, supportive school in which pupils are safe and are nurtured outstandingly well towards becoming as independent as possible. Pupils behave well and attend regularly. Overall teaching is satisfactory, although for primary-aged pupils teaching is often good. In general, teachers make too little use of computers in supporting their teaching. All pupils, including the very small number in the Foundation Stage and at Post 16, make satisfactory progress in their learning. Although the curriculum meets all statutory requirements, it is not extended or enriched enough by additional learning experiences. Over the last year, the good work of senior leaders has limited the disruption in pupils' learning and has helped to prepare pupils, and their parents, well for their move to their new school. At the same time, the school has also planned effectively for the change to teaching only primary-aged pupils and has a good understanding of what it needs to do to be fully effective in its new role. As a result, the capacity to improve is good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

What the school should do to improve further

- Use and analyse information about pupils' progress in order to gain a clear view of pupils' academic performance and the overall effectiveness of the school.
- Improve the curriculum by extending and enriching pupils' learning experiences.
- Use computers more effectively in supporting teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

As a consequence of their learning difficulties, the standards pupils attain are well below those expected for their age. Against the targets set at their annual reviews, they achieve satisfactorily.

Over the last two years the school has collected detailed records of the progress pupils make in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). These assessments show that, overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in these subjects, but also indicate that primary-aged pupils make better progress than older pupils. There is no discernible difference between the achievement of boys and girls or of the progress of pupils with different causes for their learning difficulties, although the school has yet to analyse this information in detail. The very small number of pupils in the Foundation Stage

and in Post 16 also makes satisfactory progress because their learning experiences are tailored to meet their particular needs. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, and the Post 16 students, demonstrate the extent of their learning through the Moving On accreditation. They pass a number of modules, including science and technology, careers, communication and problem solving. Their results are an appropriate reflection of the satisfactory progress they have made over their time at school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. All staff are excellent role models and have developed very caring and supportive relationships with the pupils. Pupils feel safe at school and very comfortable when they communicate their needs and their feelings to staff. They enjoy most lessons and concentrate as well as they can. Pupils' enjoyment of school is also reflected in their good attendance.

Pupils behave well because procedures for improving behaviour are well thought out and consistently applied. One parent commented that, 'Since my son has been at the school, his behaviour has improved so much that I can take him anywhere with me now. Believe me, this makes a difference.' Pupils become aware of democracy in action through the work of the school council. By raising funds, for example for Red Nose Day and the Tsunami Relief, they learn about the need to be socially responsible. They gain a good awareness of other cultures through assemblies and the programme of theme days on, for example, life in Spain and India.

At school, pupils eat healthily and regularly take part in physical activity, including learning to swim. Learning to use money helps them gain an awareness of the importance of economic well-being, although opportunities to use computers, and so develop skills in ICT, are limited. The school is well known locally because of the many links it has with other schools and places, such as the arts centre and the day centre.

All pupils are equally valued. Staff are proud that this is reflected in the recent award of the Inclusion Quality Mark.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but in many lessons for the younger pupils teaching is good and, in these lessons, pupils enjoy working hard and make good progress. Teachers know their pupils very well and are practised at using specialist approaches that match well with pupils' learning needs, such as the Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) and the 'exchange of pictures'. Planning is detailed against the targets identified for each pupil. Teaching assistants are managed well. In many lessons pupils are on task throughout, work hard and make good progress. However, in other lessons they lose

concentration because tasks are not seen as interesting, or staff are attending to others in the lesson and are not able to provide immediate ongoing help and encouragement. Often pupils are quickly returned to their learning, but this does not always happen and for these pupils further learning does not take place. Teachers do not make sufficient use of computers in promoting learning because there are no interactive whiteboards in the school and only a few computers that can be used by pupils. Opportunities, therefore, are missed to enthuse and interest pupils through colourful presentations with dynamic movement. When these shortcomings are present, pupils make satisfactory, rather than good, progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provides a suitable range of experiences for all pupils including those in the Foundation Stage and Post 16. It is made relevant to each pupil through their own targets for learning, and through the additional provision that is specified in their statement of special educational need. Pupils' additional needs are met well, for example in specialist rooms, such as the multi-sensory room, the quiet room and the room for music therapy. However, there are only limited opportunities for enriching and extending their learning experiences, although pupils have opportunities to ride horses and to learn to fish. Theatre groups are among those who visit but, overall, there are too few visitors to meaningfully increase the breadth and depth of pupils' learning. The school are aware of the need to enrich aspects of the curriculum to enhance the outstanding care, guidance and support evident elsewhere, and that the curriculum for the very small number of Post 16 students is not ideal, as it limits their opportunities to learn to live independently and to find out more about the adult world.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care and support are outstanding and are the strength of the school. Great emphasis is placed on the safety and welfare of pupils. They, and their parents, report that they feel safe and very comfortable at school. The arrangements for protecting their welfare and safety are extremely rigorous. Child protection procedures are clear and well established. Risk assessments are assiduously carried out for lessons, visits and for individual pupils. Pupils whose health needs are complex, and who may require immediate and specialised support, have clear procedures established for them, which work exceedingly well. Because they are nurtured and protected by very committed and compassionate staff they grow in confidence and express themselves joyfully as young people as they become increasingly independent.

Parents are outstandingly well informed about how their children manage at school. The communication diaries that are completed daily give detailed accounts of what, and how well, pupils did throughout the day and how they were. The end of week report gives information on progress over the week in learning and against other targets, such as those to do with toilet training, eating skills and behaviour. Both forms

of communication are very much appreciated by parents. Many use this information to benefit the progress of their children by continuing the work of the school at home.

There are good procedures for setting targets for learning, which provide good guidance to enable pupils to improve their skills. These have been established in English, mathematics, science, ICT and PSHCE and are now also beginning to be followed in the other subjects. This improvement is already providing valuable information about pupils' longer-term progress, especially for the primary-aged pupils. Good links with outside agencies ensure that pupils' needs are met very well. Visits, particularly by speech and language therapists and physiotherapists, are valued because they are effective in dealing with the specific issues of pupils. Older pupils gain a satisfactory awareness of the adult world through career guidance and through the visits of Connexions officers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management have enabled the school to deal successfully with a period of significant change. The headteacher has been particularly effective in supporting the local authority's decision to re-designate the school as a primary school. Her vision and understanding of pupils' needs has helped this change run smoothly and with minimal disruption to the pupils and their families. The headteacher is well supported by her senior management team. Together they have created valuable structures for enabling the school to make a good start in its new role. Although improvements to the procedures for assessing the gains pupils make do not yet fully influence the academic achievement of all, the good progress made by primary-aged pupils is clearer because of the good assessment procedures. Day-to-day management is good. Staff and pupils go about their business in a calm and ordered fashion. Governance is also good, and governors have given the school every support during its preparation for its new status. The thorough and comprehensive planning and organisation for the forthcoming change to a primary school reflect the school's good capacity to develop further.

As a whole, the school's monitoring of its performance is satisfactory. However, regular and frequent checks on the quality of teaching and learning are helping establish a culture of shared accountability across the staff at all levels. Senior leaders have a clear view of the school's effectiveness in relation to pupils' personal development and its care for pupils. They have gained this understanding because they make good use of the information gathered from parents and from specialists from a number of outside agencies. This detailed knowledge of individual pupils has enabled the school to successfully meet their needs in these areas. The recent improvements to assessment have created robust procedures for gathering similarly detailed information about pupils' academic progress. However, the school is not yet using this information as closely and carefully as it should in order to have a thorough understanding of how effective it is in terms of promoting pupils' academic achievement.

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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?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

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

I very much enjoyed my time with you and would like to thank you for talking with me and for helping me find out about your school. This is what I found.

- You are safe and feel comfortable at school because staff care for you and are excellent at looking after you.
- You like being at school and you like the staff very much.
- You behave well in lessons and around the school and are growing up nicely as young people. Your parents like this very much.
- Your headteacher works hard to make sure the school is calm and well ordered so that you can enjoy school and try hard to do your best.

There are three things I would like to be developed more.

- The way the school recognises how well you are doing and how it uses this information to judge how good it is.
- More use of computers to help you in your learning.
- More chances to learn from visitors to the school and by taking part in activities outside of lessons.