

# Selly Oak Trust School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103613
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	308361
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Thompson HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	321
6th form	85
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Vacant Position
<b>Headteacher</b>	Graham Ridley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 February 2005
<b>School address</b>	Oak Tree Lane Selly Oak Birmingham B29 6HZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01214 720876
<b>Fax number</b>	01214 155379

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Selly Oak Trust School is much larger than most special schools. The number of pupils in the sixth form has increased by approximately one third over the last three years. The school provides education for students from across Birmingham, and their social backgrounds reflect the diverse nature of the area. A high proportion of students are eligible for free school meals. Just under one third of the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and of these, 50 are at an early stage of learning English, which is not their first language. The largest group of pupils at the school have moderate learning difficulties, with increasing numbers of students with a range of more complex needs, including speech, language and communication needs, autistic spectrum disorder, sensory and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. Students' attainment is well below that of students of a similar age because of the nature and extent of their learning difficulties. Inspectors met some Year 11 students at the school's annual reports day but this year group was not attending school during the inspection.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Selly Oak provides an education that enables all students to make at least satisfactory progress in academic subjects across both key stages and good progress socially. The behaviour of students is exemplary and many commented to inspectors that, unlike in previous schools, they are 'happy at school' and have 'proper friends'. Positive care and guidance underpin a very supportive ethos. Staff have good relationships with students and provide good role models. This helps students' personal development, demonstrated by their very good relationships with each other and their very confident and appropriate manner with visitors. Many parents are also extremely pleased with the personal development of their children since attending Selly Oak and are very appreciative of the support offered by staff. Students are helped to develop their self-confidence very effectively and this enhances their chances of achieving good or better results. The rate of progress students make improves over time at the school and many students achieve good levels of accreditation at Key Stage 4. Progress is improving, particularly for students of higher ability, but there are students who do not make as much progress as others. Taking into account their starting points, some groups of students make barely satisfactory progress in gaining functional English skills in both key stages and in gaining mathematics skills in Key Stage 3. This is partly because teachers do not always use the information about students' levels of prior learning, particularly of literacy, to inform teaching across all subjects and help raise achievement for all groups. Some staff do not always have high enough expectations of students' ability to be independent and organise themselves. Progress in science is outstanding, and the school's specialist status for science and mathematics has given improved opportunities for students in this area. The curriculum provides a good range of different opportunities that can be organised flexibly to meet students' differing needs and interests. Students were keen to talk about the forthcoming musical production and many benefit from the range of additional opportunities on offer. Over half the students are involved in additional sporting activities at the school or in the local community. Work-related opportunities are well developed in the sixth form but underdeveloped in Key Stage 4.

Staff are very committed and many give considerable amounts of their own time to boost students' chances of gaining good accreditation. Levels of accreditation have increased over the last few years but there is no analysis of how different groups of students perform within this. The school does not adequately evaluate its own performance to ensure it is challenging all groups of students to achieve and participate at the highest level. The senior team do not use the vast amount of good information gathered about individuals to identify patterns of achievement for different groups of students. As a result, efforts for school improvement sometimes lack the required focus. The leadership are not challenging the outcomes for all students in a robust enough manner. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

### Effectiveness of the sixth form

#### Grade: 2

The sixth form is very popular and a growing proportion of students are opting to stay on at the school after the age of 16. Students are keen to lead healthy lives and offer good guidance to younger students about dietary choices. The developing curriculum offers a good balance of functional literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT), and personal, social and health education as well as option courses. There is a very good emphasis on students gaining life skills and work experience. Students achieve well and enjoy the courses on offer.

The leadership are aware that more development is required to ensure greater continuity and progression building on Key Stage 4 but they have not used information available to identify the detail of what is required.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 9**

Many students at the school make good progress across both key stages but it is evident that there is considerable variation in the progress made by students in some key subjects. Progress in science is outstanding across both key stages. In English, mathematics and ICT, there is a mixed picture. In mathematics, taking into account prior learning and the complexity of students' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, some students make good and outstanding progress but there is slow progress for groups of students who have the most complex needs, particularly in Key Stage 3. In English, it is a similar picture. Some students make good and outstanding progress but once again, there are groups who have more complex needs and who make slow progress across both key stages. Some middle ability groups also make slow progress in Key Stage 3. In ICT, students make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and last year attained good levels of accreditation at the end of Key Stage 4. Students achieve a good range of recognised qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4 and, for some students, achievement is outstanding. The average levels have risen but variation is too great between groups. Too many students do not make enough progress towards reaching functional literacy levels.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Use assessment in a more consistent and detailed way, using starting points and progress over time, to improve achievement for all learners and help them to become independent more quickly.
- Develop monitoring and evaluation so that they inform school improvement in a robust and rigorous manner.
- Embed good opportunities for developing functional literacy into cross-curricular planning to help increase students progress in this area.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Many students at the school make good progress across both key stages but it is evident that there is considerable variation in the progress made by students in some key subjects. Progress in science is outstanding across both key stages. In English, mathematics and ICT, there is a mixed picture. In mathematics, taking into account prior learning and the complexity of students' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, some students make good and outstanding progress but there is slow progress for groups of students who have the most complex needs, particularly in Key Stage 3. In English, it is a similar picture. Some students make good and outstanding progress but once again, there are groups who have more complex needs and who make slow progress across both key stages. Some middle ability groups also make slow progress in Key Stage 3. In ICT, students make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 and last year attained good

levels of accreditation at the end of Key Stage 4. Students achieve a good range of recognised qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4 and, for some students, achievement is outstanding. The average levels have risen but variation is too great between groups. Too many students do not make enough progress towards reaching functional literacy levels.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students are extremely positive about their experience at Selly Oak Trust School. Their behaviour is exemplary and those that occasionally struggle to behave appropriately usually respond extremely well to the reward and support systems in place. Many students reflect how much happier they are than when they attended other schools because they feel really safe and supported by their classmates. Students quickly improve their social skills while at the school. Specific lessons for developing social language skills help this progress. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are good opportunities to rehearse their understanding of justice and fairness and students respond well to this. Students make a good contribution to school development. Many students are keen to stay healthy and active and become very involved in extra sporting and creative activities. Attendance is satisfactory; interventions by the school have helped many of those with low attendance to attend more regularly but some students are not responding sufficiently to the incentives offered and targets for attendance are not personalised. Students grow in self-confidence but too often staff are over-helpful and therefore progress in independent and organisational skills is no more than satisfactory.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: Insufficient Evidence**

There is considerable variation in the use of assessment to inform planning for lessons. There is some good and outstanding teaching that builds carefully upon the students' prior knowledge and skills in the subject as well as the students' literacy skills. Where teachers do not use this information well, work does not match the needs of the students closely enough and uses literacy levels that are beyond their understanding or misses opportunities to stretch their use of literacy. Lessons usually have active elements to learning and students respond very well to this. Students are keen to learn and remain well focused. Teachers are inconsistent with their approaches to marking work. There are many pieces of work which do not have any comments from the teacher to help students understand how they can improve. Support staff and teachers have good relationships with students and, in the best lessons, are very clear about what students need to learn rather than simply focusing on the activity to be completed. In lessons where students know their own targets, progress is often faster.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum offers a broad range of subjects suitable for Key Stage 3 and students find them interesting. Flexible setting and groupings for the main subjects enables students to work well together. Nevertheless, subject planning is not always sufficiently well matched to the learning needs of all students.

Pathways for students from the age of 14 have clear, well-developed options, and at the end of Key Stage 4 there is a good range of accreditation available. Literacy across the curriculum is developing but is not sufficiently embedded to help improve students' progress. Specialist status has made a significant contribution to improving curriculum opportunities in science and mathematics. This includes engaging younger pupils by raising the students' interest in science and helping transition to Selly Oak. Opportunities for work experience and developing work-related skills remains a key area for development since the last inspection. The school rightly ceased to use external providers where the quality of provision was not good enough but not enough is in place for some students in Key Stage 4. The curriculum has been enhanced this year by a successful enterprise week for all students run in conjunction with the school's Trust Partner. The considerable number of partnerships enabling students to access sporting and other activities out of school hours significantly enriches the curriculum. The school also provides many interesting activities, including residential visits which students appreciate.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The layered approach to the pastoral system that responds to individual needs is extremely effective in helping students' personal development. Staff know students well and have good relationships. Students are involved in meetings about their own future and are given good guidance to make suitable choices. Where required, the school involves other professionals and has a good flexible approach to identifying key partners that will help students move forwards. Students moving from other schools to Selly Oak are extremely well supported and they settle quickly, giving their parents confidence in the school. There are some missed opportunities to review provision and make quick changes to ensure progress is good or better for all students. Good levels of training ensure staff have a good understanding of how to deal with difficult situations or any concerns they have about students. The school is diligent in meeting health and safety requirements.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The senior team provide very good role models for other adults at the school in developing relationships with students and liaison with parents. They have managed to develop and maintain very good links with other schools, other professionals and the wider community.

Monitoring and evaluation are underdeveloped. Staff are very committed and work hard but, without clear leadership based on rigorous evaluation, efforts are not always well focused. Information about individuals is rarely analysed in order to identify wider-ranging strengths or areas for development within the school. Evaluation of the progress students make at the school is based on looking at averages across the whole school or at individuals and, in this way, patterns of slower achievement have been missed. Although the school holds detailed achievement data for individuals, they have not used it to analyse groups or present a coherent picture of progress for students across curriculum areas. This has sometimes led to a slow response in helping the groups of students who are making slower progress. There is also limited evaluation of the participation of different groups. Similarly, identification of inconsistencies in practice has not always been quick enough.

Effective work from the governors to establish Trust Status has enhanced training opportunities for staff and has begun to contribute to improving opportunities for work-related learning. The budget is managed well, with a suitable plan to reduce the deficit over the next two years. Notwithstanding this difficult position, the students have good resources for learning and staff are usually well deployed. Remodelling of the workforce has helped this considerably, with a positive outcome for students' personal development and well-being.



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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	NA	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	3	

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	IE <sup>2</sup>
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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

<sup>2</sup> IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

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

Dear Students

Inspection of Selly Oak Trust School, Birmingham B29 6HZ

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. It was a pleasure to be able to talk to so many of you and your parents during the school reports day and then meet you in lessons and see your work the following day. Below is what we found out about your school.

We found that you work hard and all of you make outstanding progress in science. Some of you make extremely good progress in other subjects as well. We think some of you need more help to read and write in all lessons so that you can make as much progress as possible. We have asked the school to help you do this.

You told us how much you like the school because staff help you and you support each other, and so you feel safe. Your parents are also very pleased with this.

We think you behave extremely well and we are pleased with how confident you are to talk to visitors and be involved in a wide range of events.

Some of you could do more for yourselves and we would like to see staff using their knowledge about your abilities to give you more challenge in your work but also to help you become independent more quickly and take on more responsibility for organising yourselves. I would like you to think about how you can help this happen.

We have asked the school to use better information to help the school improve and I think your role in this is vital. For example, you told us you would like more work opportunities before the sixth form, so you also need to tell the headteacher and the senior team.

Thank you once again for making our visit so enjoyable. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janet Thompson HMI