

# Cherry Oak School

Inspection report - amended

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103626
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	323870
<b>Inspection date</b>	20 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joyce Cox

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	50
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Philip Lowe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lesley Fowler
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 January 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	60 Frederick Road Birmingham B29 6PB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01214 642037
<b>Fax number</b>	01214 645219

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	20 January 2009
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## **Amended Report Addendum**

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Cherry Oak is a small day special school for pupils with significant and complex learning difficulties which serves Selly Oak and surrounding districts in Birmingham. Increasingly, a substantial minority of the pupils have an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis. Several different ethnic groups are represented among the pupils, although the majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small proportion of pupils have a home language that is not English. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There are two Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) classes.

The school achieved a Healthy Schools Award in June 2007, a Quality Mark 3 and Financial Management in Schools in February 2008 and an Active Sports Mark in March 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

Cherry Oak is an outstanding school. Parents and pupils agree: one parent, for example, wrote on an inspection questionnaire, 'This is an exceptional school and my child has made excellent all-round improvement.' Leadership is excellent and senior leaders have been highly effective in enabling their pupils to work and play with mainstream pupils through individual inclusion packages. This means that pupils take part in exciting projects linked not only with their own local school but also with pupils in schools near Cherry Oak. This highly effective liaison allows pupils to make excellent progress, particularly in their personal and social development and in learning to communicate effectively with others. Consequently, pupils are equipped very well for their future lives.

Although standards are exceptionally low because of the pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the achievement of pupils in Years 1 to 6 is outstanding. Senior leaders carefully analyse information gained from assessments to demonstrate that all pupils, including those with complex needs, make equally outstanding progress. Children in the EYFS also achieve exceptionally well because they learn in a very happy, supportive and interesting learning environment, both indoors and outdoors.

The outstanding curriculum is innovative and successfully adapted to meet pupils' individual needs. There is a very good balance between teaching pupils key skills such as literacy and numeracy and exposing them to lively activities such as sailing, horse riding and rock climbing to enrich their understanding of the world. However, due to transport arrangements, it is currently not possible to provide after-school activities and clubs, even for older pupils. The carefully planned programme of personal and social education ensures that pupils make excellent progress in learning how to keep themselves safe and healthy. For instance, a continence advisor provides invaluable support to pupils and parents. Teachers and teaching assistants understand pupils' needs exceptionally well. Lessons are great fun and pupils are given consistent, positive feedback. This enables them to know how well they are doing and how they can improve.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. They join in lessons enthusiastically and try very hard. Attendance is good. Pupils make a full and highly valued contribution to the school and the local community. They communicate their views during circle time and at their annual review process and through the school and extended cluster councils. Excellent care, guidance and support have a very strong impact on pupils' outstanding personal development. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are excellent leaders who have very high expectations for their pupils. They enable staff to constantly examine and improve their practice. The well informed governing body works closely with the school to evaluate its provision rigorously and constantly seeks innovative ways to improve it still further. Excellent improvement has been made in many areas since the school's last very positive inspection. Consequently, the school is exceptionally well placed to improve even further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Excellent induction procedures, an outstanding partnership with parents and rigorous attention to children's welfare mean that children settle quickly into school routines and are very safe and happy. Children's achievement is excellent in relation to their very low starting points, although the standards reached remain very low. When they start school, most children have

little or no communication and many are not toilet trained. Excellent teaching enables all children to make outstanding progress, particularly in learning to join in with others and to become increasingly independent. Most children are beginning to use a limited range of signs and symbols to indicate preferences and this increases their ability to make choices, enjoy their education and work alongside others. A warm and supportive environment and highly effective teamwork ensure that children become increasingly confident in communicating. One parent writes, 'The staff are brilliant and always have time to help me with my problems. My child's walking, talking, playing and everything else has changed for the better since coming to this school.' The EYFS is very well led and managed by senior leaders who track children's achievements meticulously.

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

- Devise ways of providing after-school activities to enrich the curriculum even further.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

As expected, given their complex learning difficulties, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is exceptionally low compared to that seen nationally. More importantly, the school's tracking system clearly shows that pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points. In addition, when compared to the available national data, tracking shows that Cherry Oak pupils make significantly better progress than those with similar abilities in other schools. Different groups of pupils achieve equally well in all subjects. Senior leaders and staff make excellent use of assessment information to set challenging targets.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils behave very well and consequently the school is a harmonious and very friendly place. They readily celebrate the achievements of others in assemblies and enjoy receiving stickers and praise. It is clear from the pupils' happy faces and the school council's positive comments that they all really enjoy school and they say they feel safe and secure there. They particularly enjoy using computers and going on trips. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle very well. The school has been involved in the schools sports programme for a number of years, which has considerably improved pupils' self esteem and confidence as well as keeping them fit. Pupils greatly enjoy attending activities such as rock climbing and horse riding and the majority of pupils make healthy food choices at lunchtimes. Pupils and parents are proud of their school and relationships throughout are very good. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school, for example through the very active school council, and they also do a great deal of charity fund-raising. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school is careful to ensure that pupils learn as much about the wider world as their capabilities allow, for example through playing on instruments from a wide range of places in music therapy. Learning and social skills relevant to pupils' future lives develop extremely well, making them very well prepared for the next stage in their education and later lives.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

The school has a highly skilled and experienced staff, which includes a trained speech and language therapy assistant. Lessons are lively and interesting and staff use a wide range of different ways to very competently interest and engage the pupils. Teachers' planning is very detailed and takes account of pupils' individual needs. Teaching assistants are confident, show many talents and are deployed effectively, imaginatively and creatively; pupils have just the right amount of help to enable them to succeed, but are expected to become increasingly independent and to communicate their requirements. Pictures, signs, symbols, bright, attractive resources and computer technology are used effectively to ensure pupils are fully engaged and want to try to express their ideas. A specialist music therapist has an outstanding impact in reaching out to and 'communicating' with ASD pupils by skilfully using musical instruments and her voice.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

Personal, social and health education stands at the heart of the outstanding curriculum. Around this is built an excellent range of learning experiences. There are excellent opportunities for physical activities, including football, golf and sailing, which pupils love. A wide range of educational trips frequently takes learning out of the classrooms and pupils have excellent chances to work alongside mainstream pupils. The success of the curriculum contributes greatly to improving pupils' self-confidence and enables them to develop increased independence. However, there are no after-school activities because of transport considerations.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

Staff are vigilant in ensuring pupils' well-being and safety at all times. All the procedures for this are very rigorous. Stringent safeguarding procedures protect pupils and reassure parents and carers. Monitoring of progress, both academic and behavioural, is excellent. The school celebrates with joy the small but significant steps of progress that each pupil makes, and is currently working hard to help those pupils who are able to understand what they need to learn next. Pastoral support is excellent and the school works exceptionally well with parents and other agencies and local schools to form a genuine team around the child.

## Leadership and management

#### Grade: 1

The headteacher and the deputy headteacher demonstrate excellent leadership and have succeeded in creating a school team that is highly ambitious for all its pupils, reflects carefully on its work and challenges itself to do better. It knows its strengths and areas for improvement very well. The school is a safe and happy environment where every individual is valued and encouraged to do their best. Governors have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are very supportive. The school makes an exemplary contribution to community cohesion. It is particularly effective in promoting positive attitudes to disability

in the partner schools and in the local community. The fact that the extended services leader for Selly Oak is based at the school and that meetings are held there means that staff and pupils from mainstream schools can see at first hand how a special school works and learn to appreciate and respect the difficulties faced by many pupils. Senior leaders and staff diligently fulfil all statutory requirements in terms of equality legislation. For instance, it has long-standing racial incident log even though there have never been any racist incidents at the school.

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## Annex A

**Inspection judgements**

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

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

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

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B**

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

21 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cherry Oak School, Birmingham, B29 6PB

We enjoyed our visit to your school and I am writing to thank you for a very happy day. We agree with all your mums and dads and carers that you go to an excellent school.

These are the things we liked best.

- You behave very well and you like to learn new things.
- You love the delicious school meals and eating healthily and you are great at helping the headteacher to run the school.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make lessons very interesting and fun for you.
- Any child who needs help is always given it.
- The teachers and staff take excellent care of you.
- Your headteacher is really good at leading and managing the school.

The headteacher, staff and governors have lots of good ideas to make the school even better. We agree with their ideas. We have suggested that it would be good if they could arrange some after-school clubs for you.

We are really glad you enjoy your school.

Best wishes

Joyce Cox

Lead inspector