

Cherry Tree Learning Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103769
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	336150
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Aldridge

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	76
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Cooper (Teacher in charge)
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. In total, inspectors observed 12 lessons, each taught by a different teacher. These included home tuition and hospital teaching. Discussions were held with staff, pupils, members of the management committee and representatives of external agencies with whom the centre works. A weekly meeting of home tutors was observed. As well as observing the centre's work, inspectors scrutinised information on pupils' attainment and progress, pupils' work, information for parents, individual case studies prepared by staff, policies and other documents linked to the arrangements for safeguarding pupils. Questionnaires returned by 38 parents and carers were analysed, as were those completed by pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively monitoring and evaluation are used to determine priorities for development and to drive improvements forward
- the extent to which improvements in the accommodation and resources have had a positive impact on the outcomes for pupils
- the quality and impact of partnership work.

Information about the school

Cherry Tree Learning Centre is one of four pupil referral units in Dudley's service and it has three types of provision. The main centre caters for pupils who have emotional difficulties associated with their mental health and for pupils with physical medical conditions. All remain on the rolls of their schools and they attend the centre part-time. Some are re-integrated into their schools and others remain at the centre until they leave in Year 11. There are two further provisions, a hospital site and a home tuition service for pupils who are not well enough to travel to classes. School-age mothers are catered for through home tuition or at the centre if they have an additional medical condition. The vast majority of pupils are White British. A small number have a statement of special educational needs. The main centre has moved since the last inspection and is now housed in a building that was formerly a special school. The centre gained Healthy Schools Status in 2007.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**2****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

Cherry Tree Learning Centre provides well for its pupils and several aspects of its work are outstanding. In particular it works exceptionally well with a wide range of partners from external agencies to give very high standards of care, guidance and support to pupils and their families. As a result of excellent arrangements to support pupils at all stages of transition, it successfully re-integrates around 40% of pupils into full-time mainstream schooling. The calm and positive ethos of the centre has a highly beneficial impact on pupils' feelings of security and well-being. Dedicated and well motivated staff in all settings create a climate for learning that is well suited to pupils' needs, and so the great majority enjoy their learning. The local authority has supported improvements well; accommodation and resources at the hospital and the centre have improved significantly since the last inspection and added to the range of learning opportunities available to the pupils as well as the facilities for staff and partners to meet and carry out their work. Parents are very pleased with the provision made for their children. They feel very well informed and able to support their children's learning. Partners speak highly of the way in which the staff work collaboratively with them to improve the well-being of the pupils.

In many instances pupils arrive at the centre with gaps in their learning because they have missed schooling. Because assessment and teaching are good, they make good progress in the time that they attend, and those in Year 11 obtain a range of GCSE passes as well as other similar qualifications. The centre sets challenging targets for the amount of progress they expect pupils to make; the majority reach these and a few exceed them. Where targets are not reached, this is linked to pupils' medical difficulties, which affect both attendance and readiness to learn. There are many strengths in the provision, particularly the effective working relationships that staff forge with pupils, and their sensitive management of pupils at all times. Although teachers generally plan their lessons well, there are occasions when teachers do not provide sufficient challenge for the most able pupils. While the curriculum is well adapted to meet individual needs, the centre does not give pupils a wide range of experiences of cultural diversity in their local community, and it recognises the need to enhance provision in its self-evaluation.

Almost all pupils feel safe when they are learning and they have a very well developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe, particularly when using the internet. They are well aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, and staff successfully encourage them to take part in physical activity and make healthier choices. Pupils contribute well to the centre and the wider communities. Although attendance is adversely affected by pupils' medical conditions, their attitudes to learning and their motivation both improve while they are at the centre. They acquire enterprise skills and

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a good knowledge of the world of work, which prepare them well for the next step in their journey. Few leave the centre without a meaningful placement in education or training.

There is a good capacity to sustain further improvement. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection, despite the upheaval caused by the move to new premises. Monitoring activities are widely shared, and staff work effectively together to improve the quality of teaching. The centre has recently identified a set of key indicators against which it can measure its success and it evaluates stakeholder views as well as outcomes for pupils. It does not have a means of evaluating the progress made by pupils who stay a short time, because benchmarks are based on progress made over one or two key stages and not all pupils attend the centre for this length of time. There is a good deal of data on personal development but this is not always analysed to get the most out of it. In the current annual improvement plan, arrangements to monitor developments are clear but opportunities are missed to identify measurable intended outcomes for pupils. This makes it difficult to evaluate the impact of some developments.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the provision by:
 - ensuring that teaching challenges pupils of all abilities, particularly the most able
 - extending the range of opportunities for pupils to experience the cultural diversity of their local community.
- Strengthen self-evaluation by:
 - developing a means of evaluating the progress made by pupils who stay at the centre for short periods
 - including in the improvement plan the intended outcomes for pupils
 - analysing all available data to diagnose strengths and areas for development.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils learn effectively in lessons, make good progress during their time at the centre, and achieve well. Attainment is average, although this is not always reflected in results because of pupils' medical conditions at the time of taking examinations. A few pupils achieve exceptionally well by obtaining 5 A*-C GCSE passes. Analysis of different groups suggests that there are no significant differences in achievement. The centre successfully re-engages pupils in learning. In the great majority of lessons, pupils are attentive, remain focused on tasks and complete the work set. They answer questions, and show interest and curiosity. Most work is neatly presented. In art, scientific investigations and cookery, pupils show enthusiasm for practical tasks, and most are willing to work in pairs and help one another. They readily accept safety rules, such as wearing goggles in science, and their good behaviour contributes to the quality of

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learning. While some willingly complete work independently or at home, a few find it difficult to motivate themselves.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Very effective arrangements to support pupils moving back into their schools give them the confidence and skills to make this transition. Pupils show a willingness to reflect, on their experiences at the centre, for instance. They show tolerance and respect for others and empathise with those less fortunate than they are when they raise funds for charities at home and abroad. Through subjects such as art they develop imagination and creativity. Pupils have a strong voice through the school council and have influence; they chose the name for the centre when it moved, for instance. Currently they are taking part in a local regeneration project by contributing their art work and design ideas. Pupils learn about the customs, beliefs and cultures of others through lessons and enrichment activities, but have limited first-hand awareness of diversity in the local community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have very good relationships with pupils. They know them as individuals and

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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are particularly skilled at motivating and engaging pupils during lessons. There is a suitable balance between maintaining pupils' feeling of security and the pace of lessons. Improved resources for information and communication technology (ICT) are used effectively. For instance, in a home tutored literacy lesson, a video clip was used to good effect to inspire a pupil to write creatively. Teaching uses humour effectively too, and pupils enjoy this element of fun. Assessment is accurate and used well to plan suitable tasks and activities designed to increase knowledge, understanding and skills. However, teachers do not always identify learning outcomes that reflect the different abilities of the pupils and some are better than others at using probing questioning to encourage greater understanding or extended answers. As a result, there is occasionally a lack of challenge for the most able. In the hospital setting, good subject knowledge enables teaching to quickly identify what pupils know and they are then moved swiftly on to new learning. Staff make sure that pupils know what the intended learning outcomes are and review learning towards the end of each lesson. They also provide good guidance about examination requirements, or what pupils need to do to move from one sub-level to another. Marking celebrates success and provides pointers for improvement. To encourage independent learning, the centre provides supported self-study sessions.

The curriculum is well matched to individual needs. For instance, the curriculum is distinctly different for the most vulnerable pupils, with much cross-curricular work and a strong emphasis on developing social and emotional skills. In a small number of instances individuals have personal programmes to meet their complex needs. The new premises have increased opportunities for pupils as there are more specialist areas, such as an ICT suite, cookery facilities and spaces for physical activities indoors and out. Pupils are now successful in obtaining a nationally recognised qualification in ICT. The centre offers a good range of accreditation that recognises both academic achievement and personal effectiveness. Strong partnerships enable pupils to have experiences that the centre could not otherwise provide. Pupils enjoy the enrichment activities on Friday afternoons; many of these are provided by visitors and promote awareness of cultural diversity, but there are limited experiences of this in the local community. In the hospital and home tuition services, provision is rightly focused on core subjects, with some opportunities for cross-curricular topic work in the afternoons in hospital. Here there is a pleasant schoolroom with good quality displays, as well as internet access.

A very strong ethos of care and concern permeates the work of the centre. This is felt chiefly in pupils' well-being, and excellent communication and teamwork with a very wide range of different partners ensure that pupils get the support and advice that they need. The breakfast club provides a healthy start to the day and staff make good use of the time, for instance to get pupils talking about issues raised in daily newspapers. Improvements to the accommodation have enhanced support arrangements; there is an appropriate room for counselling, for instance. The centre is also piloting parent, carer and family counselling. School-age mothers return swiftly to school after the birth of their child, because they are very well supported in this process. Pupils have timely advice and guidance from the Connexions officer, and the co-ordinated support also extends after 16 if it is needed, to help students settle in their placements.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The teacher-in-charge sets an excellent tone for the centre. There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement and all leaders and managers are successful in securing and sustaining improvements, such as increasing the range of courses on offer and contributing to the development of teaching and learning. Some elements of self-evaluation and strategic planning are not fully developed, such as a way of evaluating the impact of provision on pupils who stay at the centre for short periods, or setting measurable outcomes for pupils in improvement plans. On behalf of the local authority, the management committee is influential. Members have a broad range of skills pertinent to the nature of the centre. They hold the centre to account through regular meetings and evaluations such as pupil and parent surveys. They are developing a cycle of review and evaluation as part of their revision of their terms of reference. Members are visible in the centre and known to staff.

Staff morale is high. All are proud to work at the centre and feel well supported personally and professionally. Although there is no teaching and learning policy, lessons are monitored with a specific focus in mind; good practice is shared and support given where improvement is needed. As a result of this, teaching is good.

Staff strive to ensure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed. Their progress and well-being are carefully monitored, and the performance of individuals and groups is analysed. Although data on improvements in personal development is used effectively as an indicator of readiness for re-integration, it is not analysed to find out whether the centre could do more to improve the provision.

Arrangements to safeguard pupils are robust. A member of the management committee checks that requirements are met. Staff are well trained in child protection and relevant medical matters. Risk assessments are thorough and suitable action taken to assure safety. The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to learn about health and safety matters, including in the workplace.

Staff have considered ways in which they can better promote community cohesion and the resulting action plan forms part of the improvement plan. Activities already implemented have been evaluated by surveying pupils, and there has been a positive impact on both motivation and enjoyment. The survey has also identified ways of enhancing the provision by providing more experiences of cultural diversity.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

In a relatively high return of questionnaires, parents and carers show that they have a high regard for the work done in the centre. Inspectors also took account of the centre's surveys of parents' and carers' views. Those who have children in the hospital appreciate the teaching that pupils have and find it helps to take children's mind off their medical difficulties. Parents of home tutored children are equally positive, although a small number would like more hours. Several parents wrote of their appreciation of the support provided for their children and the whole family, and inspectors agree that this is excellent.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cherry Tree Learning Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 76 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	50	14	44	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	20	63	8	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	81	6	19	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	69	9	28	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	27	84	5	16	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	75	8	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	63	9	28	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	22	69	7	22	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	78	7	22	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	69	6	19	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	78	6	19	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	78	5	16	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	84	4	13	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



18 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cherry Tree Learning Centre, West Midlands, DY1 2NX

During our recent visit we felt welcomed wherever we went and we are grateful to those of you who volunteered to share your views with us.

At Cherry Tree Learning Centre there are many good things and some aspects are outstanding. In particular, staff work very well with a wide range of other professionals to make sure that you get the support you need. Your parents are delighted with the centre and what it does for you. We were pleased to see that you are making good progress and achieving well. Almost all of you feel safe, and we noticed from the comments made that you very much appreciate the atmosphere of the centre. You also know a good deal about how to lead a healthy lifestyle, and are encouraged to make healthy choices, including taking part in physical activities. You contribute well to the centre and to the wider communities. The new building has increased opportunities for you to take part in enterprise activities and gain qualifications in ICT. You also learn lifeskills and are well prepared for the next step in your journey. The centre is really successful in helping you to return to your schools when you are ready to do so.

There are several things the staff are going to do to improve further. They will make sure that you are encouraged to tackle tasks that help you progress further. They have already planned to give you more opportunities to get out and learn about the many different cultures in your own community.

Staff are going to work out a way of measuring the progress made by those of you who only stay for a short time at the centre. When they plan developments they are going to work out how to measure whether these have helped you to improve at all. They are going to analyse all the data they have to identify strengths and areas for development. We wish you all well. Keep up the good work!

Yours sincerely

Sue Aldridge

Lead inspector

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