

Cherry Oak School

60 Frederick Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6PB

Inspection dates 19–20 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Cherry Oak School is a rapidly improving school, which provides an excellent education for its pupils.
- Pupils' achievement across all subjects is outstanding due to the rapid progress they make.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle into the school very quickly and make outstanding progress from their starting points.
- The executive headteacher has created a dynamic and forward-looking leadership team. This has resulted in rapid improvements in all areas of the school since the previous inspection.
- All staff want their pupils to achieve the very best that they can and have very high expectations of them.
- Teaching is outstanding due to careful planning, accurate assessment of pupil progress and high levels of challenge for all pupils.
- The school provides excellent opportunities to enrich the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This, in turn, results in the pupils' acceptance and celebration of the similarities and differences between them.
- Behaviour is outstanding and all pupils are very keen to learn and achieve success. Pupils' relationships, both with each other and adults, are excellent. Pupils, parents and staff rightly feel that behaviour is exemplary.
- Pupils feel extremely safe in school and stated they could talk to staff if they have a problem. The procedures all staff follow to ensure pupils' safety are outstanding. Parents are very positive about the safety of their children.
- Leadership and management at all levels are excellent. All the staff work as one team, with clear lines of responsibility, linked to strong accountability.
- The leadership and management of teaching are outstanding and have brought about the high quality teaching across the whole school.
- Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding.
- Governors know the school very well because they visit often and meet regularly to look at school data and discuss performance. They challenge the senior leadership team very effectively, as well as providing exceptionally good support and strategic leadership.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning in lessons across all year groups and were accompanied by the executive headteacher and head of school during all of these observations.
- Inspectors heard a number of pupils read from Year 1 and Year 6. They also observed lessons on language and communication skills development and the teaching of phonics (linking letters and sounds).
- Discussions were held with a representative of the local authority, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, a group of pupils and members of the leadership team.
- Discussions were also held with several parents and a telephone conversation took place with the school improvement partner.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation covering safeguarding, minutes of governing body meetings, information relating to the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils across the school. Inspectors looked at documentation regarding the behaviour of the pupils and their attendance.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the pupils' work in their books, files and around the school.
- There were not enough responses to register on Parent View, (the online questionnaire), but the inspection team took account of the 40 responses to a recent school questionnaire and the comments made during discussions with parents. The inspection team considered 32 responses from staff to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Ronald Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jayne Clemence

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cherry Oak School caters for pupils with severe cognitive learning difficulties, speech and language difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders.
- The executive headteacher is the headteacher of Cherry Oak School and its federated partner Victoria Special School. There is a head of school and both schools share the same governing body.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs for severe learning difficulties, including speech and language difficulties and/or autistic spectrum disorders.
- Over half the pupils in the school are supported by the pupil premium, special government funding, which is well above average compared with national figures. This additional funding supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average, being approximately half the population of the school. One pupil in every four speaks English as an additional language.
- The school has a larger than average number of pupils who enter and leave the school at times other than those normally expected.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of a mixed Nursery and Reception group and all children attend full time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that data analysis routinely includes children's Early Years Foundation Stage attainment data when they enter their Reception Year in order to give the senior leadership team an even sharper view of progress and achievement across the whole school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Since the previous inspection the executive headteacher, closely supported by the leadership team, has quickly and effectively secured rapid improvements across all areas of the school. The subject leaders and those responsible for managing different year groups have grasped their responsibilities with confidence, due to the excellent training and support they receive.
- All leaders and managers and the staff as a whole are very aspirational for all their pupils. All class teachers have high expectations regarding work and behaviour. This in turn has led to the pupils having high expectations and constantly wanting to challenge themselves.
- The senior leadership team ensure that all groups of pupils are very well catered for. For example, those pupils with English as an additional language are provided with extra support to make sure their progress is in line with that of their peers in school. Pupils from minority ethnic groups are also supported very effectively and also achieve as well as their peers in school.
- All leaders and managers at every level are fully involved in improving all aspects of the school. This has ensured a consistency of approach and high standards in the quality of teaching. Further training, mentoring and mutual staff support have led to all staff being highly trained and motivated to do the very best they can for their pupils.
- Robust and rigorous management of staff performance makes sure that the quality of teaching is carefully checked. The senior leadership team ensure their work is also looked at carefully through external moderation, such as joint observations, work scrutiny and data analysis. These actions highlight any further actions needed to improve teaching such as targeted training for staff and opportunities for them to observe best practice in other schools.
- All policies and procedures are created and agreed collectively by staff. These procedures form secure foundations for teachers' practice and makes sure that all the work set for pupils matches their needs and abilities.
- The range of subjects taught is broad and well balanced to ensure that the majority of pupils make outstanding progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers constantly adapt their lessons to match each pupil's interests, and enables pupils to make those next steps no matter how small they may be.
- The senior leadership team and governors provide a wide range of excellent opportunities for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This includes being involved in a wide range of local cultural activities, residential trips and working with a range of artists. The school also carefully and constantly celebrates and explores the cultural differences and similarities between the various groups in school. This in turn helps to prepare them for life in a modern British society.
- The school is effectively using the primary school physical education and sports funding to provide further training for their physical education teacher, to provide greater resources and wider competitive sporting opportunities. Consequently, pupils are far more physically active. This was exemplified during observations of break and lunch times. Pupils of all ages were enthusiastically engaged in a wide range of physical activities, from riding a range of bikes and scooters to playing a range of games together.
- The senior leadership has begun to explore its preferred approach to assessment once they stop using the National Curriculum levels. This includes maintaining its current systems including the possible use of the Early Years Foundation Stage developmental ages or creating a system of their own alongside their federated school.
- The federation of Cherry Oak and Victoria School has been of considerable support to the school, with

staff able to share expertise across schools and to extend the range of resources available to each school. All staff spoken to state the federation is very positive for both schools.

- The senior leadership team uses the pupil premium funding very effectively. This has been used to part fund a family support worker. Her work was highly praised by the parents spoken to who stated that her courses and support had, 'Created a life line that had changed our lives and that of our children.' The work she does to support attendance initiatives has resulted in marked improvements with attendance being above national averages for similar schools. The funding is also used to provide extra classroom support staff and play leaders at lunch times. The latter have had a particularly marked effect in the school. There has been a sharp decline in behavioural incidents, as pupils are fully engaged in activities at lunch times and very clearly indicated to the inspectors how happy they were with the activities they organised. This results in disadvantaged pupils making outstanding progress, in line with their peers in school in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school has good links with the local authority, which carefully monitors and tracks all aspects of the school's work. The local authority rightly feels the school provides an excellent education for its pupils. So much so that it uses the school leadership team to support its own work in other schools. There are also excellent links with a wide range of specialists from speech and language therapists to doctors, nurses and physiotherapists.
- The links with parents are excellent and both the school questionnaire and the parents spoken to were highly positive. As one parent stated, 'For the first time ever I feel listened to. I can talk to them and they talk, really talk to me.' Another stated, 'I just don't know what I would do without them. When I am at my very bottom, the support they give me picks me right back up – they are fantastic.'
- The school ensures that all aspects of its work to keep pupils safe are robust. All staff are fully aware of the procedures to follow should any issues arise. Checks to ensure the pupils are safe when absent are timely and thorough. All risk assessments are rigorously completed and checked by both the senior leaders and governing body. All logs and records are very well kept and cross-referenced and the senior leaders monitor any trends carefully. The local authority often recommends the school's systems to other schools.
- The rapid and sustained improvements seen across the whole school since the last inspection demonstrate a strong capacity to improve further. The school's own evaluations of its work are very accurate and based on substantial and very well moderated evidence.
- Assessment and tracking systems are robust and the progress and attainment of all pupils is carefully checked every half term. This ensures that should any underachievement be taking place it is rapidly identified and interventions put into place to bring pupils back on track.
- Those responsible for the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage have established robust monitoring and tracking systems, which ensure they have an excellent understanding of the children's abilities right from the start of their education. However, the school's senior leaders do not routinely include the baseline assessments on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage provision of the school in their main tracking systems. This means it is hard for leaders to have a global picture of progress from entry to exit as they need to look at two sets of information.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body ensures that everyone in the school is treated fairly and without any form of discrimination. Governors ensure that all school activities are open to all and that funding is available so that everyone has an equal chance of attending. All staff performance is carefully monitored and this information is used effectively to financially reward good performance and create effective professional support to help all staff develop further. Governors have an excellent understanding of where pupils are in the school and how they compare to pupils in similar schools and to those nationally. They carefully monitor the spending of the primary sports funding and pupil premium, and the results achieved through this funding. Governors are very proactive in their responsibilities for safeguarding with many of them being fully trained. They carry out at least termly checks on the premises and regular checks on all other aspects of safeguarding and child protection. Through regular training the governors ensure

they maintain their ability to be highly effective in both challenging and supporting the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils have a strong desire and willingness to learn that is very clear to see in all their lessons. This strongly supports and develops their rapid rates of progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary and they have a real craving for learning. They take pride in their work and this was well supported from evidence in a wide range of books and work, all of which was very neat and tidy. They take a pride in their school and this can be seen in the general decor and tidiness of all areas of the buildings.
- There have been no exclusions for nearly two years and the incidents of poor behaviour have dropped considerably over the same period.
- Pupils, parent and staff all rightly feel that behaviour is excellent and any issues are dealt with quickly, effectively and proportionally by staff. Pupils work together sensibly and play together with confidence and clear enjoyment. They celebrate the successes of others. This was seen during an assembly. Several pupils were awarded stickers for excellent work and other achievements and a number of other pupils spontaneously called out a range of congratulatory comments.
- Behaviour at break and lunch times is exemplary. Pupils play together very well clearly enjoying the range of opportunities provided by staff. This was especially so during lunch times when the play leaders created a range of games and activities for the pupils. These opportunities were readily taken up and enjoyed by the pupils. In the dining room there is a calm and relaxed atmosphere where pupils and staff engaged in quiet conversation. Staff support and encouragement helped pupils develop a positive understanding of how to behave during such times.
- The excellent behaviour of the pupils is due to the consistently high expectations of the staff, as well as the highly positive relationships between pupils and adults. This means that pupils want to be their very best and so please the staff as well as being able to show they can behave well. Children in the early years also quickly settle and demonstrate highly positive behaviour due to the excellent routines which help give them boundaries and set expectations.
- Pupils' attendance has continued to rise and is above average for similar schools nationally.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Everyone involved in the school rightly feel that Cherry Oak is a very safe place to learn and work. All visitors to the school are carefully checked and monitored. Everyone who is in the school regularly is suitably checked through the national procedures.
- The pupils state they feel very safe and that they can go to any staff member when they want to. As one pupil summed it up, 'All staff care about us, we care and we feel safe.' Pupils understand how to stay safe and staff provide a range of support systems to help them to be so. This includes symbol cards, which remind them of stranger danger or other things that may harm them. Parents were particularly thankful for these as they could use them out of school.
- Children in the early years also feel very safe due to the excellent systems in place to ensure that all children are kept safe and secure.
- Given their ages and disabilities pupils have a good understanding of the various forms of bullying as well

as what is right and wrong. Pupils also know how to stay safe on the Internet and the school fully supports and assist families in helping them to protect their children at home.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching has rapidly improved since the last inspection and there has been a sharp rise in achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. Both school evidence and that of the local authority and external consultants confirms that much of the teaching across all key stages and all subjects is outstanding and is never less than good.
- Teaching in the early years provision is outstanding and as a result children make outstanding progress. They plan effectively for all groups of children and provide a wide range of engaging activities both indoors and outside which encourage the children to learn.
- All staff have very high expectations of pupils in terms of their work and levels of behaviour. Teachers plan very effectively for each pupil in their class, providing fun and engaging activities, which in turn encourage pupils to learn. Where teachers have pupils who have English as a second language they ensure they are fully supported, including where necessary any specialist language support.
- All groups of pupils regardless of their ethnic or social background are challenged and encouraged to do their best. This was clearly seen during a mathematics lesson where pupils were learning subtraction skills. One group had been given the task of resolving a series of subtraction problems in a given time period. The level of engagement, mutual encouragement and desire to complete the task as a team was highly evident. One pupil chose a problem they felt was too hard and said so. However, their classmates gave them encouragement and challenged them to do it. This spurred the pupil on who, consequently, completed the problem correctly and was exceptionally proud of the congratulations from others.
- All staff are very aware of how each of the pupils in their class learn and take this fully into account at all times. They also use this information to amend or adjust the work in lessons to ensure that all pupils continually make the best possible progress.
- The teaching of phonics has improved considerably since the last inspection and lessons seen showed that teachers have developed their skills well. In turn pupils use these skills effectively to help them build words and to improve reading skills. This was seen both when listening to pupils read and during a Year 4 phonics lesson. Pupils were building consonant and vowel words – choosing a symbol or picture and building the words they represented. All staff modelled letter sounds accurately and enabled pupils to do the same which helped them to blend and combine letters together and form words accurately.
- Pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics are taught both as core subjects, but also across all areas of learning. They are closely linked into the development of the pupils' speech, language and communication skills. There is consistently excellent use of signing, symbols and electronic communication aids by all staff, which allows pupils to communicate as fully as possible.
- Feedback to pupils is excellent and proportionate to the pupil's individual abilities. Written feedback is constructive and allows pupils to know how to improve their work. The scrutiny of work clearly showed this was the case and that pupils improved their work because of the comments made by staff. Where verbal feedback is more appropriate this too is highlighted in the pupils' work and again work shows that pupils react to this by improving their work.
- All work is very effectively annotated to show the progress the pupil has made and what they need to do next. All targets are challenging and the staff ensure the pupils know their targets and how to achieve them.
- The staff who support learning are highly effective and very well trained. They play a crucial part in all the pupils' learning. The teaching teams are so effective it is often difficult to work out who the teacher is in the classroom. This is due to clear and effective communication between the teacher and their team. The other adults who support learning, however, also feel empowered to modify and change the learning if it

is not producing the desired results. All staff play a key role in the assessment and tracking of the pupils' progress during lessons.

- Teachers carefully link their work to the support of a wide range of specialists, such as the speech and language therapists and physiotherapists, to ensure a cohesive and continual approach to meeting all the needs of each pupil.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The attainment of children entering early years is well below that expected for their age due to their special educational needs. In the Early Years Foundation Stage children regardless of their ethnic or social background make rapid progress in their developmental stages and especially in their social, behavioural, language and communication skills. Due to the excellent support they receive children who speak English as an additional language also make outstanding progress, especially in their development of the English language.
- As pupils move through the school this rapid progress continues in reading, writing and mathematics as well as in other subjects. There are no variations between the different groups in the school. Disadvantaged pupils enter the school with skills and knowledge in line with their peers in school. The school ensures they are exceptionally well supported so that they make as much progress as their peers in school and there are no gaps between any groups.
- The most able pupils are fully challenged to think and work hard. They make rapid progress in line with their peers in school, reaching higher levels of achievement. Some of these pupils manage to reach National Curriculum levels from very low starting points.
- Those pupils who are able to read do so with pleasure and all pupils clearly enjoy looking at books, having stories read to them or discussing picture books. In a number of lessons observed staff were seen discussing books and writing in a wide range of forms and encouraging pupils to read and look at the words.
- Language and communication skills are of paramount importance in the school and all staff constantly encourage pupils to use a wide range of communication methods and aids. This in turn helps to stimulate the pupils into communicating and is a core reason for rapid rates of progress in this area. The more they learn the more the pupils communicate with each other and with the adults around them. In a number of classes pupils of various ages were confident and fluent enough to hold conversations with the inspectors about their work and the school.
- School information, which is very thoroughly validated externally, clearly shows that the proportions of pupils making and exceeding expected progress are highly positive. A high proportion of pupils reach the higher progress levels in reading, writing and mathematics. This supports the school's accurate view that all pupils make outstanding progress in all subjects. Therefore, the school ensures the pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their next stage of education.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Leadership and management of the early years are outstanding. Leaders have ensured excellent teaching, which has resulted in children making outstanding progress during their time in the provision. Learning journals are very effectively used to track and monitor the rates of pupils' progress, as well as providing robust evidence for this progress. Staff quickly build excellent relationships, which mean that the children feel safe and secure. All safeguarding, health and welfare requirements are fully met and the children feel very safe and secure. Children's behaviour is outstanding.
- The children clearly enjoy learning and quickly learn the routines in the school. This is especially so in terms of washing their hands and moving sensibly from one activity to another. Children quickly learn to use the symbol cards, which enable them to know what they are doing and when, which fosters

confidence.

- Children quickly learn to work and play together and as a result this supports their language and communication development. They are encouraged to practise their writing skills from an early stage and to look at books which sows the seeds for their future interests in reading later in the school. Where appropriate, staff begin to develop children’s understanding of letters and the sounds they make.
- The provision has excellent links with its federation partner and a number of other local special and primary school early years provisions. These partnerships are used effectively to moderate their work and ensure their views and judgements about children’s progress are accurate.
- Links with parents are extremely strong, founded on the home visits staff carry out before the children enter the school. Staff also communicate fully with parents who feel highly engaged in their child’s education and development. There is daily communication as well as regular face-to-face and telephone contact to ensure that both the parents and school are fully aware of any issues that may affect children’s learning.
- Resources are excellent and allow staff to present the children with a wide range of exciting and fun activities. These further encourage and motivate the children to learn and help ensure a good foundation for their future education.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	103626
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	447880

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Dalby-Ali
Headteacher	Justine Sims (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2012
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