

# The Old Park School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103880
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dudley
<b>Inspection number</b>	355483
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 September 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Lewis

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>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	102
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	21
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Rita Tonks
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Gill Cartwright
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 December 2007
<b>School address</b>	Corbyn Road Russells Hall Estate Dudley
<b>Telephone number</b>	01384 818905
<b>Fax number</b>	01384 818906
<b>Email address</b>	office1@old-park.dudley.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed eighteen lessons, seeing 14 teachers and two Higher Level Teaching Assistants. Meetings were held with governors, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documents including data on pupils' progress, teachers' planning, curricular documents, pupils' files and the school's self-evaluation. It analysed 36 returned questionnaires from parents and carers and 24 from staff.

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

- How accurate is the school's evaluation of pupils' progress, including the progress of pupils with differing needs.
- How well does the school make use of the information gathered from its monitoring and evaluation to bring about improvements.
- What is the impact of staff changes.
- How well the school's post-16 provision equips students with appropriate skills and knowledge for the future.

## Information about the school

The Old Park is a larger- than- average special school in Dudley in the West Midlands. It caters for pupils, who have a range of learning difficulties. About half have severe learning difficulties and just under a third have complex or profound needs, including multi-sensory impairments. The remainder are mainly pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils are White British; much smaller numbers are from other ethnic backgrounds. A small minority are looked after by a local authority. The school has specialist Special Educational Needs status for Communication and Interaction and provides training and an outreach service to partner mainstream schools as an element of this.

The school has a number of awards including The Basic Skills Quality Mark 2, Activemark, National Health Promoting Schools Award, ECO School (Bronze) and the International School Award. In January 2012 it will move to a new site alongside two mainstream schools.

**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?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

### Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Parents and children say this is a 'wonderful' school with 'wonderful staff', where pupils achieve 'so much personally and educationally'.

Inspectors agree that the outcomes are outstanding for pupils of all ages, whatever their starting point or needs. This is because the quality of care, guidance and support, the use of assessment to support learning and the curriculum are of the highest quality. This outstanding provision is in place because of the excellent leadership and management of the Headteacher and her deputy. Together they have transformed the ways in which the school evaluates its work, through rigorous monitoring of the impact of provision, especially teaching, on pupils' learning and well-being. They have used this effectively to bring about sustained improvements, for example in teaching, where teachers and teaching assistants almost always match the work very closely to the pupils' needs and next steps of learning. The school has improved well since the last inspection. The governing body fulfils its duties well and now more actively challenges and holds the school to account. Therefore, the school has an outstanding capacity to improve.

Although academic standards are low owing to the severity and nature of pupils' learning and medical difficulties and/or disabilities, their achievement overall is good. Their personal development is outstanding in areas such as their understanding of healthy life styles and how to keep safe. Staff celebrate each tiny step towards learning and independence that pupils make, which inspires pupils to try even harder and achieve more. Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress. The school makes outstanding provision for students in its sixth form. As a result students noticeably gain in confidence and skills as they progress through the sixth form and almost all transfer to further education or training.

Teaching is good overall. It is sometimes outstanding, particularly in the ways in which teachers 'hear the pupils' voice' and incorporate their ideas. Occasionally, lessons lack pace or opportunities are missed to extend pupils' learning even more. Specialist school status has enabled the school to become even more effective in supporting pupils' communication and language development. This status has enabled it to develop the skills of its partner schools in meeting their pupils' needs through, for example, Makaton training.

Pupils are happy, and gain a great deal of enjoyment from all that the school offers. Attendance is good and behaviour is excellent. Outstanding partnerships with agencies, businesses and other schools add to pupils' learning opportunities and achievements and so they learn to keep themselves safe. The school tries hard to work in partnership with families and provides a range of school based activities for them to learn further about their child's needs and programmes. It recognises that it could do more to involve a few

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parents fully in understanding how their child can make greater progress in their learning.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring:
  - no opportunities are missed in any subject to extend pupils' learning
  - the pace of lessons is neither too slow nor too quick for any learner so that all are engaged all of the time.
- Improve further the partnership working with parents and carers by:
  - developing more extensive ways to help them understand their child's learning and the next steps to ensure progress and support this at home.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****1**

Outcomes are excellent because pupils of all ages make good progress in subjects and excellent progress in their communication and social interaction skills and their life skills. They also make outstanding progress in areas of particular individual needs, such as their feeding regimes, behaviour, mobility or engagement with the world. Smiling faces and laughter throughout the day are indicative of pupils' thorough enjoyment of their education. Primary aged pupils with complex needs, use considerable effort to lift and move their legs and arms to imitate the characters in a story and attend for increasing periods to their teacher's voice. Older pupils learning successfully about 'Webster' the dog, really enjoy his antics, demonstrating their understanding and extending their signing skills in judging him, 'Good Dog' or 'Bad Dog'. Key Stage 4 students getting ready to visit a local shop demonstrate really good progress in their ability to recognise coins, a few learning to make simple additions and subtractions that will help them in their shopping. Pupils of all ages particularly enjoy the welcome sessions and clubs led by teachers in which music, signs and song are used to support their involvement.

There is no evidence of any significant underachievement by any individuals or different groups of pupils. The school's highly effective use of data to track and monitor progress in relation to national strategies confirms this and pupils' good and sometimes outstanding achievement. Those with the most complex needs, including those with multi-sensory impairments and those with autistic spectrum disorders, make significant gains, quickening their social development as they become skilled in the use of pictures, symbols, switches and signing to communicate with others. Pupils in Key Stage 4 and post-16, gain a range of both academic and vocational awards highly appropriate for their levels and needs.

The development of pupil independence and self-help skills is a significant strength of this school. From an early age, pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and show initiative. The school council structure enables pupils to contribute and really influence their learning environment and the local community, for example, through ecological projects. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. For instance,

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they take full advantage of the award winning canteen regularly eating very well balanced meals. Throughout the school the pupils extremely successfully develop their physical, personal, social and health education skills due to extremely good use of resources.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Lessons are rigorously planned and classes are managed very well. Teachers know their pupils needs very effectively. In the best lessons, teachers plan interesting, varied and highly personalised activities for all. In an outstanding literacy lesson, for example, the teacher integrated the pupils' mobility targets into the lesson extremely well, using touch, signs and symbols to extend their communication and understanding. Excellent teamwork with teaching assistants kept everyone absorbed in this lesson and enabled pupils to make significant steps towards their targets. Teachers' use of praise and

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

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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encouragement to pupils is also highly effective. It provides very clear indications as to how they are doing and spurs them on further. For example, an older pupil 'glows' with pride at his teacher's response to his three word sentence and repeats it again with enthusiasm.

The excellent curriculum is underpinned by a focus on using communication and independence skills to enable access and choices for all. New developments such as using the same theme in all subjects really help pupils to make connections in their learning, using signs and apply their skills in broader meaningful contexts. In addition, pupils' progress is supported by a range of enrichment activities which include activity weeks, off-site residential opportunities and charity days. The range of courses and the ways that pupils' learning have also been extended. For example, the Foundation Learning initiative with local schools and colleges means that learning can be 'carried over' and accredited further for older pupils wherever their next placement is.

The school provides an outstandingly caring and supportive environment for pupils. These are underpinned by a highly appropriate range of policies and procedures that are well understood by staff and implemented consistently. Procedures for maintaining good attendance work very well. Pupils feel secure and well supported in school. They are confident about taking part in a range of challenging activities in and outside school. These and the strong careers education programme and links with the Connexions service all prepare them well for the next stages in their lives. The school's specialism makes a strong contribution to its provision and that of its partnerships, enabling highly effective staff development in different communication approaches. Outstanding partnership working with therapists and other agencies makes a very strong contribution to pupils' progress as individualised programmes are followed through into lessons, swimming programmes and lunchtime activities.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Leaders and managers at every level have a very clear view of where the school is going and what now needs to be done to improve further. The school has considerable evidence to back up its judgements about how well it is doing. It challenges itself constantly to do better and so sometimes is a little modest in its evaluation. The Headteacher and senior staff provide committed and outstanding direction for development, analysing the school's work extremely well. Middle managers are now

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highly effective, reviewing and monitoring carefully and with insight the impact of provision on pupils' achievements. The mentoring and monitoring networks really support all staff so that pupils' learning remains of a high standard. Outstanding local partnerships and national and international links have significant impact on pupils' social skills and cultural understanding. The school values all pupils as individuals. It is proactive in ensuring that there is no discrimination or harassment in school. Pupils develop excellent tolerance and a good understanding of the needs of others as a result. Safeguarding procedures, including risk assessments are outstanding and have the highest priority. There is rigorous documentation and guidance and very well thought out procedures. These ensure pupils are safe and have the best support, but do not over constrain, allowing each pupil to try out challenging experiences and gain confidence from these. As a result pupils feel extremely safe. They and their parents have a high level of trust in the school and its staff. Through the curriculum, local and extended links, including its specialist school community work, the school plans carefully and very effectively to promote community cohesion.

Governance is good and has some outstanding features, such as the ways in which governors have worked tirelessly towards the new school but also to improve the environment of the existing one. Governors are dedicated, maintain close contact through visits and through their different roles which monitor the school's progress effectively. Occasionally, the partnership with parents does not ensure that everyone understands fully how they can assist their child to learn even more at home. The school uses its resources very well to ensure outstanding outcomes for pupils and therefore provides excellent value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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



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## Early Years Foundation Stage

The school makes good and improving provision for its youngest children because of the high quality team work of all staff and the good leadership and management. Staff have a very clear focus on helping each child to demonstrate their capability and to make simple choices. This element of their work is excellent. All children, whatever the complexity of their needs, are helped to learn and develop well, in all areas of learning and exceptionally well in physical development, communication, early literacy, personal, social development and self help skills. Teaching is good overall, although occasionally opportunities to extend children's learning even more are lost because staff are sometimes unsure about how to balance child initiated and adult led experiences.

The quality of care and support is exceptional. This is a caring, environment in which children's safety and well-being are paramount. Detailed, high quality observations and assessment mean that each child's programme is carefully personalised and children's individual personalities and talents are nurtured and shine through. Both the outdoor and indoor learning environments have been improved considerably since the last inspection although some of these improvements are new and staff are still exploring how best to make the learning linked between the two environments. Staff are skilled at organising classrooms to ensure children are always safe and all have a wide range of experiences.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Sixth form

The sixth form has improved well since the last inspection and is now outstanding. Consistently high standards of assessment of prior learning and achievement enable students to make outstanding progress in the sixth form, because the learning opportunities are so personalised and there is a very clear focus on preparing students for their future lives. Students have extensive support to develop key skills such as numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology. They receive continual feedback on their progress and the next steps required for further achievement and this inspires them to achieve more. They are justifiably proud of their excellent achievements and growing independence. Gains in life-skills are strongly reflected in the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network awards students achieve. Good teaching and excellent learning experiences, community work,

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work-related learning and college modules provide a wealth of meaningful opportunities for students to develop their self-confidence, work preparation and social skills. As a result, students make outstanding progress in their communication skills and personal development. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

**Views of parents and carers**

About a third of parents and carers returned the questionnaire about their views of the school. Their comments are overwhelmingly positive about the school and its impact on their children. They have confidence in all aspects of its work and in the leadership and management. Inspectors agree with these positive views. A few commented that they would like to be even more involved in their children's learning and to have more confidence in their children's progress and readiness for the next stage of their life. Inspectors found that the school involves parents and carers well in their learning and prepares pupils extremely well for their future life. It already has plans to involve parents and carers further.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Old Park School 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 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 102 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	69	11	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	67	12	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	58	15	42	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	61	12	33	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	67	11	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	56	14	39	1	3	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	58	15	42	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)	17	46	16	44	2	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	64	12	33	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	47	19	53	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	36	23	64	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	69	11	31	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	81	7	19	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



23 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Old Park School, Dudley, DY1 2JZ

We did so enjoy visiting your school and want to say thank you for the way in which you welcomed us into your lessons and talked with us.

You told us it is a wonderful school and we agree with you. We think you are very lucky to go to a school like The Old Park. Your teachers work really hard to make lessons interesting and fun and to help you achieve well and do all the things you would like to do for yourself. You make good progress in all of your work because everyone is so good at working out how best to help you to learn. You are looked after very well at The Old Park School and everyone works together very well to keep you safe and to help you learn. We particularly like the way in which you can use signs, switches and symbols to help you do this.

We think your headteacher leads the school excellently and that she has a really good team of teachers helping her. She and the governors are working well together to improve things even more and they know exactly what needs to be done.

We have asked them to think about two things;

Making the teaching even better so that everyone learns as much as they can in every lesson.

Finding even more ways of involving your parents and families in your learning so that they can all be more involved in your learning.

You can help too by continuing to be so well behaved and trying your best

Once again thank you so much for sharing your lessons with us. We do agree with you that The Old Park School is a really good place to learn in.

Yours sincerely

Susan Lewis

Lead inspector

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