



SEND Inclusion Award (SENDIA)

Verification Report

School name:	Yew Tree Primary School
School address and postcode:	Birchfield Way, Yew Tree Estate, Walsall WS5 4DX
School telephone:	01922 626926
School website:	Enquiries@yewtree.sandwell.sch.uk
Head teacher:	Mr Jamie Barry
Head teacher's email:	-
SENDIA coordinator:	Amy Walker-Laver
SENDIA coordinator's email:	-
Award verifier:	Angie Moore
Award adviser (if applicable):	
Date of verification:	24 June 2024

Commentary on the evidence provided:

The portfolio of evidence was extremely thorough and well-organised, making it easy for me to find everything that I needed to verify the Award. All the KPIs were clearly labelled and fully achieved and Amy was on hand in any case, should I have needed any assistance. Perusal of the file of evidence made it patently obvious to me that Yew Tree is a school which very definitely believes in the importance of working together as a team to improve its provision in order to continue to meet the needs of its pupils. On the day, evidence was presented through a well-prepared PowerPoint and discussion with the coordinator, Amy, and Jamie, the Headteacher, which clearly demonstrated a strategic approach and clear evidence of the school's continued excellent best practice in the field of special educational needs. The presentation they delivered facilitated a very thoughtfully presented and comprehensive range of evidence and their careful preparation ensured that I was provided with a full picture of SEND provision in the school. There was clear evidence, both from the presentation and from my perusal of the file of evidence, of the school's determination to build on its best practice and continue to involve the whole school community in the delivery of its SEND provision. I was extremely impressed with the professionalism and attention to detail which Amy presented throughout the process leading up to Verification. She is a consummate professional who has worked extremely hard to ensure that Yew Tree is very definitely a leading light in the field of

special educational needs and inclusion. Amy is very modest about her role in achieving this prestigious Award, insisting on this being a team effort (which it definitely is), but she very much deserves to be recognised for her commitment and dedication to the needs of all the pupils at Yew Tree Primary School. I don't think I have ever seen such a comprehensive and focused file of evidence.

Strengths identified during verification:

The main strength I identified during verification was the thoroughness of the evaluation of data and the impact that this has had on outcomes for pupils. Amy's record keeping is second to none and the whole school is dedicated to ensuring that every pupil in its care reaches their full potential. There was clear and concise evidence (in abundance) for each of the Objectives and it was made absolutely obvious to me from my perusal of the files of evidence, my discussions with stakeholders and during the excellent presentation, that no stone has been left uncovered to ensure that Yew Tree is a well-deserved recipient of this prestigious Award. I was also impressed with the strength of pupil voice and the fact that the staff ensure that the needs of every child and young person are addressed to the very best of their ability. This was borne out to me during my conversations with various stakeholders during the day and in the feedback from the questionnaires. The school environment is bright, cheerful and conducive to learning. The classrooms, corridors, outside spaces and offices are well-designed, warm and welcoming and bear testament to the importance the school places on core values of Responsibility, Respect, Courage, Ambition and Pride and its motto, 'Learning without Limits'. I was particularly impressed with the teaching and intervention sessions that I was privileged to witness on the day and with the obvious progress the children have made in their writing in particular, using the Kinetic Letters scheme (which I believe every school would benefit from using). The evidence of progression that I saw in children's workbooks was absolutely amazing and bears testament to the hard work and commitment of their teachers and the school's best practice in the field of SEND. There is also evidence of strong and effective leadership and a commitment to ensuring that inclusion and progression for every child remains a core component of the School Development Plan. Amy's record keeping and the school's systems of monitoring and evaluating pupil outcomes, using Insight and other means to ensure that every child, irrespective of needs, is supported to reach their full potential, is commendable. I cannot speak highly enough of all the school has done and continues to do in the field of special educational needs and inclusion.

Impact: including feedback from the stakeholders

The main impact has been that, because of the Headteacher's commitment to ensuring that every child, irrespective of need, progresses and achieves, the school has gone from strength to strength in the field of special educational needs and inclusion. The focus the school places on the importance of monitoring and evaluating data relating to progression and attainment is commendable and it is to be congratulated for the progress it has made and continues to make in this area as a result.

Meetings with stakeholders:

PARENTS:

The parents I met with were overwhelmingly delighted with all the school does to ensure that they and their children feel valued and supported. They could not speak highly enough about the support that is in place for them and their children. One parent told me how the progress of one of his

children since joining the school has been 'phenomenal' and how he and his wife could not have coped had it not been for the help they get from the school. The parents could not speak highly enough about Amy and her team, telling me that, although children with SEND can be challenging to deal with, the school does not just focus on the negatives, they are always ready with lots of positive comments too. They told me how Miss Thompson is 'amazing' and how much the staff do every day to ensure that their children feel 'happy and loved'. The parent of the child mentioned above was also anxious to let me know how much he appreciated the Headteacher contacting him from his holiday in Greece to check on his younger child who had been involved in an accident. Another parent agreed with this and told me that her son had been at 4 different schools before being enrolled at Yew Tree and she has been amazed at the progress he has made since. She went on to tell me that 'this school goes the extra mile to help our children'. Another parent told me how other schools tend to write children off if their behaviour is challenging, but how this is never the case at Yew Tree because 'children respond to their kindness and know they are loved and looked after here.' Whilst a small number of parents I met with earlier in the day told me that communication is not great at the school, this was certainly not borne out by the responses to the parental questionnaires which show a very high percentage (approx. 95%) of parents being delighted with all the school does. Overall, the parents I spoke to could not speak highly enough about the care and support their children receive at Yew Tree, telling me that 'the school wants our children to succeed as much as we do' and 'this school is like having a second family – our children love it here.' They went on to tell me that the staff at Yew Tree are always looking at things they can do to help their children more and how they always listen to their concerns and do their best to help them. Finally, I was told by a parent about the problems she faced trying to get her child an EHC plan and how much Amy in particular helped her with this. She went on to say that 'Amy is a star – no-one can say anything negative about her or the rest of the staff here because they are mega supportive of us and our children!'

STAFF:

The staff I spoke to could not speak highly enough about the emphasis the school places on the needs of the children with SEN. They confirmed that communication between school and home is second to none, going on to tell me how they share IEP targets with parents and have conversations and communication with them regarding their children's progress. They went on to talk about how they communicate with each other before, during and after lessons (TAs and teaching staff) and how when interventions are put in place they always share this information with each other. They went on to talk about their use of DIRT books and the effectiveness of the Insight tracking system that the school uses. They confirmed that communication between TAs has really improved as a result of this and how any necessary interventions are shaped because of using this system. They also confirmed that they have had much training on such things as epilepsy and autism and how there is also regular twilight training on SEN issues and that they have access to National College training modules too. They finished by talking about the Research Projects which they are engaged in and which they will be sharing with the SLT and each other shortly. I was impressed with this idea and with the subject areas they have chosen to research, such as 'How can Wellcomm Screening support SEND children'; 'Early Talk Boost'; 'Fine Motor Skills' and 'Sensory Integration'. This is an excellent example of the impact of sharing best practice and a wonderful way for staff to develop new skills in the field of SEND. It was made clear to me from my meeting with the staff at Yew Tree that this is most definitely a school which takes the importance of an holistic approach to the progress of each child, irrespective of their needs, extremely seriously. The staff confirmed that they always work as a team and that communication between teaching staff and teaching assistants is therefore very

effective and conducive to learning. All in all, the staff could not speak highly enough about all the school has done and continues to do to support the SEND needs of the children in their care.

GOVERNORS:

I had the pleasure of meeting with Sharon Fry (Assistant Head, Deputy DSL and Staff Governor) in person and the SEN Governor joined us in a telephone link. Sharon confirmed that she has had the pleasure of meeting with every link Governor, including the SEND Governor (Kyshia) twice a year. She explained that during these meetings, progress is discussed and linked to the School Improvement Plan with priorities set for the following year. She continued by confirming that SEND is discussed in curriculum meetings and committees and that it is also discussed at full Governor meetings. When asked about why she applied to become the SEND Governor, Kyshia confirmed that she believes that the school offers an extremely broad scope for children with SEN and the staff at Yew Tree really know their children and understand their needs. Kyshia told me that she has always had an interest in special educational needs and confirmed that she is extremely pleased with all that the school offers in this field both to the children and their families. She went on to say that there is such a wide spectrum of needs across the school and that Yew Tree's main strength is in knowing the children and understanding what their difficulties are in overcoming barriers to learning. Sharon went on to confirm that the staff at Yew Tree are extremely proactive in raising concerns and talking to Amy and parents when needs are identified. She talked about the importance of embedding a triangular approach – child/family/staff in order to best support the needs of the child. She went on to talk to me about how all Sandwell schools use a tool called 'Wellcomm' which is a language assessment tool, going on to tell me how all children are assessed in nursery at the beginning and end of the year and that those who don't score within their age range are picked up and interventions put in place to support them. She also talked about 'Talk Boost' and how they use this tool to help those children identified to improve their scores. She went on to confirm that children who are found to be significantly below their targets are referred to Speech and Language therapy (after discussions with parents) as only parents can refer. However, she confirmed that the school will always help any parents struggling to refer by inviting them in to give consent over the telephone. They finished by confirming that Amy is doing a wonderful job and that, as a result of her passion and commitment to embedding such strong and effective methods of monitoring and review, they have every faith in the school's ability to continue to excel in this area.

PUPILS:

The children I spoke to were delightful and full of enthusiasm for all they are doing at school! When asked, they were able to tell me about the support they get in school and how this has helped them in their studies. B told me that Mrs Neville helps them and that the teachers never make them feel 'bad because even teachers make mistakes in their spelling!' P told me how Miss Neville has helped her with her maths and given her tips on how to do things when she's stuck on anything. B then told me that he loves English and, when he's by himself he 'writes loads of stories.' A explained how sitting next to B can be difficult when he's trying to hear the teacher sometimes, but that his teacher always helps him to catch up if he misses anything. B and A are good friends though and enjoy each other's company. B told me how he's been at three other schools, but really loves it at Yew Tree and wishes that he could stay longer. When asked what they like best about getting extra help in lessons, K told me that he 'likes getting extra help because it helps him to get the right answers.' B went on to say that he had to use a pencil because his handwriting 'wasn't brilliant' but added that he is working really hard to improve this. When asked about how their parents know what they are

doing at school, they confirmed that their teachers tell them ‘all about our work and keep them up to date.’ A went on to tell me that his mum ‘focuses on the bad stuff too much though!’ He later told me that he would rather stay on at Yew Tree than go to high school, because he ‘loves it here.’ When asked about the clubs they attend at school, P told me that she loves helping out at the farm with Miss Lappage on Fridays; K told me how much he loves the football club, because ‘it’s great, and I want to be a footballer one day’ and B told me how much he is looking forward to the summer fayre. He finished by telling me that he is in the process of being tested for ADHD and Autism and is looking forward to hearing the results! The children that I had the pleasure of talking to really impressed me with the empathy and understanding they possessed and the very mature manner in which they answered my questions. They are a credit to the school and to their parents.

Areas for development:

Continue with the excellent work you have already implemented with regards to SEND inclusion – you should feel justifiably proud of all you have achieved. Please continue to ensure that SENDIA remains a central thread in your school development plan as you are doing wonderful things and need to continue to do so. I would also like to see you share your best practice in the field of SEND with other schools as you have much to offer in this area. One of your ‘key priorities’ mentioned in the presentation is to ‘Strengthen and develop the expertise of all staff and leaders, in developing a fully inclusive learning environment ...’ and I witnessed this in action during my time at the school. Please continue to develop your best practice as you are certainly making a real difference to the life chances of the children in your care.

Verifier recommendation:

I have no hesitation whatsoever in recommending that Yew Tree Primary be granted the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Inclusion Award for a period of three years. I was overwhelmed by all I saw at this excellent school and I wish you every success in the future – well done!

Head teacher comments:

Our vision of Learning Without Limits embodies our ambition for EVERY child at our school. However, as this report demonstrates, this is much more than words on a page. I am proud that we have created and developed the incredible staff team that we have as they are the ones who make this happen. They truly believe in inclusion and they work beyond expectation, supported by dedicated and talented leaders, to meet a growing range of SEND.

Like all schools recognise, we know there are significant challenges in being inclusive due to lack of funding and lack of capacity in the SEND system locally and nationally. However, we shall continue to campaign and speak out so that our children get the support they deserve. Our work, strengthened by our involvement in Sandwell’s PEIA (Priority Education Investment Area) SEND project, will continue into the future.

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