

The Orchard School

Cambridge Road, Canterbury CT1 3QQ

Inspection dates	12–13 July 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher is a force with which to be reckoned! Her level-headed optimism and ability to build consensus with pupils, staff and parents alike, have paved the way to rapid improvements all round.
- From very low starting points, pupils make strong progress in their learning, securing far better outcomes than in the past.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and improving rapidly. Pupils place great faith in the teaching and leadership of the school. They demonstrate a redoubled sense of self-worth and a growing belief in what they can achieve.
- Pupils say they feel safe and take pride in the school. They say the school has improved 'a lot'. Changes to the rules, including a uniform and the introduction of rewards have been welcomed.
- Teaching is good and improving. Teachers and other adults manage the learning environment well, ensuring that best use is made of resources to support rapid progress in pupils' learning.
- Governors have raised their game. An injection of 'new blood' with relevant expertise and skills has helped enable governors to exercise their statutory duties more effectively.
- Teachers feel valued, motivated and supported to improve their practice well. Training and links with other highly-rated schools have helped teachers identify how to improve their teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Outcomes are not yet of a consistently high enough standard. In particular, teaching is not yet enabling the most able pupils to meet their full potential.
- A few pupils' risk assessments are not detailed enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that outcomes continue to improve to the level of outstanding, by:
 - ensuring that teachers and other adults recognise fully who the most able pupils are in their classes and plan appropriately challenging learning activities that deepen their knowledge and broaden their skills
 - ensuring that teachers maximise every opportunity to develop pupils' numeracy skills.

- Improve the impact of leadership and management to the level of outstanding by ensuring that:
 - all pupils' risk assessments provide complete clarity in relation to what actions need to take place, by whom and in what circumstances
 - identified and agreed improvements to the site are chased up with the local authority and slippage is not tolerated.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Following a period of marked turbulence since the last inspection of the school, the headteacher has transformed pupils' and teachers' belief in what they can achieve. Pupils have reconnected with the leadership of the school. Their behaviour and attendance have improved greatly. Teachers are 'upbeat' and morale throughout the school is high.
- Leaders at all levels have been empowered to take responsibility and lead effectively. For example, in the past, pupils were not set challenging achievement targets and their progress in learning was not tracked closely. This is no longer the case. With the support of a local authority adviser, the assistant headteacher has set up secure systems which are enabling helpful interventions to be triggered when pupils lag behind.
- Leaders monitor teaching and scrutinise pupils' work frequently. Middle leaders are growing in confidence and are increasingly effective. The work of the intervention leaders in particular is ensuring that significant gains are being made to pupils' reading, writing and communication skills, particularly in the primary phase.
- In addition to pupils' achievement targets, teachers access a wide range of information to help inform their lesson plans. This includes targets from pupils' education, health and care plans, their emotional, social and behavioural targets and where relevant, pupils' speech and language targets. Effective use of this information is helping to improve the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.
- Training to support teachers' and other adults' understanding of how to manage effectively pupils' behaviour is well researched. Similarly, staff have valued training provided by senior staff and local authority advisers on how to assess pupils' progress in learning and plan accordingly.
- Teachers have welcomed opportunities to visit other schools and learn from best practice. They are implementing new approaches enthusiastically that they have observed elsewhere to good effect.
- Appraisal procedures for staff and teachers were not a priority in the past. This is no longer the case. Governors admit that the process has been slowed down by a period of temporary leadership, prior to the appointment of the headteacher.
- However, governors now point to strong systems with which to call staff to account. This year, all teachers have been set targets linked to pupils' outcomes with mid-year and end-of-year reviews incorporated.
- The curriculum prepares pupils well for the next steps in their education and entry to adult life in modern Britain. Leaders keep the curriculum on offer under review. As a result, more pupils are now entered for GCSE examinations than in the past. This academic year has heralded a significant reduction in the numbers of pupils not in education or training after leaving the school.
- Further sensible changes have been scheduled into the timetable for the next academic year. In particular, there will be improved opportunities for pupils to access a range of academic qualifications as well as a broader range of vocational pathways.
- Opportunities to extend pupils' learning are a strong feature of what the school provides. The majority of pupils do not live locally and are transported to the school via taxi. However, input from visitors such a local author Martyn Barr, who recently visited the primary phase, and chances to learn new skills such as gliding for secondary pupils, are scheduled throughout the year.
- During the inspection secondary pupils who had recently returned from an 'outward bound' residential trip, enthused about what they learned. They valued particularly the fact that the trip had helped them to gain accreditation for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is a key priority within leaders' improvement plans. Governors have appointed a new leader to ensure that each of these aspects feature within individual teachers' lesson plans. The approach is in its infancy. However, inspectors found good evidence of teachers planning creatively to develop this aspect of the school's work.
- Equality of opportunity is a top priority. Unacceptable behaviour or attitudes never go unchallenged; discrimination is not tolerated. Since the appointment of the new headteacher, leaders no longer use permanent exclusion. However, the focus on reinforcing and rewarding positive behaviour has already helped build pupils' confidence and resilience. There has been a marked reduction in incidents resulting in sanctions or a need for physical restraint.
- Leaders work effectively with parents, foster families and the local authority. Annual reviews and education, health and care plan reviews are convened according to appropriate timescales with pupils' files kept up to date with the most recent information.

- Leaders have put the primary school sports funding to good use, encouraging greater participation rates through bespoke coaching for individuals, for example in golf and boxing. A similar approach is being adopted to equally good effect in relation to pupil premium expenditure, with additional help tailored to help raise pupils' literacy skills.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are clear about the strengths in teaching and the improvements in pupils' behaviour and achievement.
 - Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership and composition of the governing body. A new chair has been elected and new governors with relevant knowledge and skills have come on board. There is a redoubled determination to make up for time lost during the period of temporary leadership in relation to matters such as teachers' performance management and sustaining further improvements in learning and teaching. Governors have acted wisely to ensure that the headteacher has been supported well by a very experienced consultant headteacher.
 - Governors are increasingly effective in challenging the local authority in matters such as the need for improvements to the safety of the school site. However, a longstanding issue concerning pupils' access to a roof space, although now successfully resolved, has been dealt with slowly.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Child protection procedures are robust and the school's leaders work closely with external agencies to protect vulnerable pupils. The suitability of staff employed is secured through safer recruitment practices and an up-to-date register of the adults employed at the school. Health and safety checks are routinely undertaken, including risk assessments of the school's site. However, although risk assessments are in place for each pupil, not all of them provide enough clarity on what actions need to be taken by whom, and in what circumstances.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Good teaching is characterised by teachers' strong commitment to a team approach when working alongside teaching support assistants and other adults. Pupils, in turn, recognise that the adults in the school know them well and will always help them to achieve their best.
- Teachers and other adults make excellent use of the learning environment and resources to maximise pupils' achievement. Good-quality displays provide opportunities for pupils to benefit from visual cues where necessary. Classroom spaces are arranged so that pupils can work in harmony with each other in the same room. Equally, good use is made of information communication and technology to ensure pupils' aptitudes and skills are developed to meet the changing needs of the world of work.
- Teachers and other adults demonstrate a strong awareness of the specific behaviour strategies that will support the best progress for individual pupils. Their adherence to these approaches is a strength of the school. It is enabling pupils to take greater responsibility for their behaviours and to progress well in their learning.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils told inspectors that in the past, this was not always the case when behaviour was poor and teaching failed to engage them fully. In particular, pupils agree that teaching is now much better because it motivates them to achieve. They spoke enthusiastically about the new rewards system which provides an incentive for them to meet their learning targets.
- There is a strong focus across the school on developing pupils' reading, writing and communication skills. When pupils lag behind, the intervention leaders play an important role in providing additional help to bring them back up to speed. However, a similar approach to the development of pupils' numeracy skills has been slower to take effect.
- Throughout the school and particularly in the primary years, leaders are able to demonstrate the significant gains being made in pupils' reading ages through the effective use of an accelerated reading scheme. A similar approach is being used to equally good effect with the development of pupils' writing.
- Teachers and other adults model outstandingly good behaviours. Their calm and consistently positive interactions with pupils ensure that pupils improve their social and coping skills quickly, including pupils who are new to the school.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have made assessment of pupils on entry to the school a priority. Meetings are convened with governors in attendance and pupils' progress towards challenging targets is reviewed at six intervals throughout the year.
- However, leaders do not track the progress of the most able pupils as a discrete group. Evidence gathered in lessons and through a scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that these pupils are not always sufficiently challenged because they are not flagged up to their teachers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The headteacher has introduced a new approach to the development of pupils' welfare by encouraging pupils to take personal responsibility, requiring them to focus on 'my safety, my community and my future'. This approach has reduced the need for physical restraint very significantly from triple to double figures over a period of four terms.
- Leaders work closely and effectively with external agencies to ensure that where necessary, pupils receive an integrated support plan that will result in the best possible outcomes. Barriers to learning are identified and plans show how pupils will be supported and by whom, how progress will be monitored and what the intended outcomes will be.
- Rates of attendance are rapidly improving in line with improvements in teaching and pupils' attitudes to learning. The very low attendance of a small number of pupils is health related. Leaders monitor the attendance of low-attending pupils closely, ensuring that work is provided for them, including home tuition and that there is regular and frequent contact between their carers and the school's staff.
- Without exception, pupils attest to feeling safe in the school. They state that this was not always the case in the past, when behaviour was described as 'out of control' and teaching was frequently interrupted. Pupils understand about e-safety and other types of bullying which are covered in assemblies or tutorial time.
- Most parents who responded to a recent survey of parents' views state that they are fully included in their child's education, health and care plan. They also feel that the school meets the needs of their child and applauded the communication between school and home.
- Leaders track and monitor the behaviour, attendance and well-being of pupils who attend off-site provision at Aspire and the Canterbury academy routinely. Comprehensive risk assessments coupled with close and effective liaison ensure that these pupils' needs are addressed well.
- Leaders have made sure that advice and guidance for pupils' next steps in their education, training or employment are provided by an external adviser. Most of the pupils who completed the online survey found this advice to be helpful.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Behaviour has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Fixed-term exclusions have reduced significantly and there have been no permanent exclusions during the current academic year.
- During pupils' journey through the school, teachers and other adults provide firm guidance and support in enabling pupils to develop the skills to self-correct and develop mature and responsible attitudes to their learning. A uniform introduced at the beginning of the year is worn proudly by all pupils.
- At lunchtimes, pupils and staff join each other for lunch and engage in enrichment activities, such as board games. The atmosphere is calm and respectful. Throughout the day, where incidents arise, staff deal skilfully with any problems so that pupils are able to continue to enjoy and achieve with minimal interruption to their learning.
- Fair and straightforward rules, a rewards system and the identification of 'student' leadership roles have contributed significantly to pupils' renewed sense of self-worth, resulting in a sizeable reduction in the need for physical restraint. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the rewards system and the process for nominating and electing their leaders. They value the fact that they now have ambassadors who can represent the school and their views.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils join and leave the school at varying points during the academic year. Without exception, pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge and skills when they arrive. Their experience of mainstream provision prior to joining the school has been punctuated invariably by frequent periods of absence and often periods of extreme unhappiness.
- Over time, pupils' progress from their starting points and results in national tests and examinations do not compare favourably with national figures.

- However, through their close assessments of pupils' standards on entry to the school and routine monitoring of how well pupils progress from their starting points, leaders are able to point to good and outstanding progress by the time pupils reach the end of key stages 2 and 4.
- Almost all pupils at the Orchard school are disadvantaged and therefore entitled to pupil premium funding. There is no marked difference between the achievement of these pupils and their peers.
- Although leaders have increased the number of subjects offered at GCSE level, the total number of entries per subject is relatively small. Nevertheless, a close analysis over time points to a year-on-year improvement in GCSE examination success, particularly in English, science and mathematics.
- In the primary phase, the introduction of an accelerated reading and writing scheme has yielded considerable success, with many pupils now reaching and some exceeding their chronological reading ages from very low starting points.
- High-quality one-to-one additional help provided by skilled intervention leaders is resulting in accelerated progress for many pupils in primary years. Equally, the introduction of challenging targets, monitored and checked at six review points during the year helps keep pupils in each year group focused. Staff, too, remain 'on their toes,' recognising an urgent need for success.
- Upon leaving the school, most pupils move on to the further education or vocational provision of their choice, including those who have attended off-site provision. In 2015, there was a considerable improvement in the completion rate with only one pupil having dropped out of education or training at the end of the year.

School details

Unique reference number	119058
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10002369

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hugh Robinson
Headteacher	Annabel Lilley
Telephone number	01227 769220
Website	orchard-school.com
Email address	headteacher@orchard.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 October 2013

Information about this school

- The Orchard School is a small, maintained special school for pupils who have social, emotional, and mental health difficulties. Many pupils, including all pupils in the secondary school, have additional learning difficulties.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan for their social, emotional, and mental health needs.
- Most pupils are boys. Many pupils join and leave the school mid-year.
- The school is based on one site. The primary phase caters for up to 30 pupils aged from five to 11. The secondary school caters for up to 40 pupils aged 11 to 16.
- Almost all pupils are eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority). Just under a quarter of pupils attending the school currently are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are of White British background.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school arranges access to alternative provision at Aspire and the Canterbury academy for a few pupils in key stage 4.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 15 lessons, some jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the interim head of the primary years, senior leaders and staff.
- Inspectors met with governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Pupils and staff completed an online survey on the first day of the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team scrutinised a number of documents, including those related to safeguarding and child protection. The inspectors also considered records of pupils' attendance, behaviour records and other documentation concerning leaders' self-evaluation and monitoring.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of pupils' work across subjects. They also held meetings with pupils across the age range. They spoke to pupils informally in lessons, at breaks and at lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the online pupil and staff surveys. There were no responses to the online survey, Parent View. Inspectors took account of a very recent online survey of parents' views conducted internally.

Inspection team

Lesley Farmer, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sue Cox

Ofsted Inspector

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