

# Apple Orchard School, Slinfold

Independent special school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Angela Corbett HMI
Social care inspectors	Paul Taylor & Kevin Whatley

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

An inspection of the care provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for children's homes. This inspection took place at the same time but the full report is published separately on Ofsted's website and should be read in conjunction with this report which covers the educational registration of the school.

## Information about the school

Apple Orchard School, previously known as the Apple Orchard Education Unit, which opened in March 2000, is an independent special school owned by the proprietors of Bramley Care Ltd. The school forms part of the Bramley Care integrated provision of education, care and therapy for boys with recognised difficulties relating to abusive behaviour and is viewed as a therapeutic community. The boys live in one of three children's homes, two of which were also inspected at the same time. The school moved to its current new and purpose-built accommodation attached to another of the homes in September 2009. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in September 2008 and the other residential home in April 2010.

The school is registered for boys aged between 13 and 18 and currently, 19 boys in this age range attend from London boroughs or counties in the Midlands and south of England. Their places are funded by their local authorities. Twelve students have a statement of special educational needs referring to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and most have a history of academic underachievement.

The school aims to prepare boys for independent living in the community and in improving their self-esteem through the promotion of academic and sporting achievement. They are encouraged to learn strategies to manage their behaviour and discuss their difficulties, both individually with a therapist and in groups with other boys.

## Evaluation of the school

Apple Orchard School provides an outstanding quality of education for its students and very successfully meets its stated aims. The boys' behaviour is outstanding and they thrive and thoroughly enjoy school as a result of the outstanding teaching and

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

assessment and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The daily care of the boys is excellent and they feel extremely safe in school. However, welfare, health and safety are good overall because while safeguarding policies and procedures are very secure, a very few minor amendments were required. Significant progress has been made since the last inspection, particularly in relation to the new premises and classroom resources. The school meets all but one of the regulations for independent schools.

## **Quality of education**

The good curriculum is supported by clear policies and schemes of work based on the National Curriculum and examination specifications. However, there is inconsistency in the degree of detail provided across some schemes of work. There is a major and successful focus on the improvement of basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Students are taught in three groups according to ability, and within school the core curriculum includes science, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), art, French, physical education (PE), religious education (RE), photography and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). Geography, history and music are not taught discretely but covered through trip and cross-curricular activities.

The range of vocational qualifications has expanded both in school and through college and work experience placements. However, external placements are not always appropriate which limits access to a wider range of vocational qualifications to meet individual learning needs, in particular for older students. The school is working to expand its vocational curriculum by providing in-house specialist accommodation for those students unable to attend college. Students are successfully entered for GCSEs and Entry Level Certificates and these are used well to develop self-confidence, provide progression and support achievement. They have access to good careers education and guidance through the curriculum, Connexions interviews, visiting speakers and visits. Individual and group therapy sessions to address the students' specific needs and behaviours are timetabled weekly. The exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular experiences contributes significantly to the students' academic and personal development. The synergy in practices and the exceptional way in which the school and care home staff across all three homes work together on a day-to-day basis provide a highly effective and fully assessed 24-hour curriculum.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding. This is because teachers have good subject knowledge, carefully prepare and consistently deliver lessons enthusiastically and at pace using a wide variety of approaches and methods. The strong relationships between staff and students enable excellent, frequent and highly effective questioning and answering. Learning is always set in contexts that have meaning to the students and this further promotes their interest so they engage eagerly in their learning. Students say 'learning is fun'. Teachers make excellent use of praise and rewards to build students' confidence and self-esteem as well as to

develop mutual respect for one another in very positive learning climates. Teaching assistants are highly effective in all lessons and provide outstanding support to teachers to secure students' excellent overall progress. The boys are exceptionally enthusiastic about school and their learning and so they make outstanding academic progress in most subjects, including literacy and numeracy, from often low starting points. Students say they particularly enjoy practical learning and would like more opportunities for this. Classroom resources are high quality and teachers make excellent use of them.

The quality of assessment in classrooms is excellent so that teachers know precisely students' current learning and they use this information very effectively to inform their planning as well as to provide feedback to students on how to improve as well as monitoring the boys' progress against challenging personal education plan targets. All students are thoroughly assessed on entry. New systems for recording and tracking student achievement are also beginning to have an impact on the precision in target setting and in showing progress over time in relation to individual starting points.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students**

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The very consistent approach to the boys' moral and social aspects by both the school and care homes staff contributes significantly to their excellent personal development. This is reflected in the very appropriate relationships they form and the great courtesy shown to the care and school staff as well as each other. They are able to maturely reflect on any incidents and value the school's system that recognises and rewards good behaviour and achievement. Their high levels of enjoyment of school are reflected in their exemplary attendance and outstanding behaviour in lessons and around school. Lunch and break times are enjoyable social occasions. They understand the importance of eating healthily and they make the most of the numerous sporting and recreational activities offered to them and understand the importance of regular exercise.

Students learn about other cultures, religions and life in other parts of this country through the curriculum and in sharing their differing backgrounds. As a result, the atmosphere in the school is very inclusive and harmonious. Students hold the staff in high regard, in particular the headteacher, and their excellent attitudes to learning are also shown in their respect for the new building and classroom resources.

Students feel they are listened to and their ideas and views are taken seriously and often acted on. They can call a meeting to discuss issues of concern, and confidently, openly and maturely express their thoughts.

The high focus on students' development of basic and life skills, and in their achieving as many qualifications as possible, helps prepare them exceptionally well for their education and life beyond the school. In addition, an extremely wide range

of visits are organised including trips to museums, the theatre and adventurous activities as well as to places of worship. Together, these all contribute well to their good understanding of British institutions and services and their awareness of how to behave in numerous community settings.

## **Welfare, health and safety of students**

The provision for the students' welfare, health and safety is good. The school works very closely with the care home staff to provide excellent day-to-day care. Students are extremely well supervised at all times both in school and during off-site visits. Risk assessments are rigorously completed for all activities. Twice-daily handover meetings keep students and care and education staff very well informed about events or concerns and celebrate success. This consistent and close working between care home and education staff together with a key worker for each student provides both stability and security so that students know there is always an adult they can turn to. Homework diaries also assist in providing continuity between the school and care homes.

Arrangements for child protection are entwined with those for the care home and staff are trained in line with requirements. All the required policies for promoting students' health, safety and welfare are in place and underpinned by very effective systems which are carefully adhered to by all staff. However, minor amendments were needed to the anti-bullying and child protection policies.

The few accidents, incidents and interventions by staff are recorded meticulously reflecting the highly effective behaviour and discipline policy. Similarly checks on portable electrical equipment and fire safety monitoring are conducted routinely. The school's admission register is diligently completed and fully meets requirements. The new school is fully accessible and fulfils its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002, although an accessibility plan to cover aspects such as the curriculum is not yet in place.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The systems for the recruitment of the proprietor, staff and volunteers are secure and meet the regulations. The school's single central record includes the proprietors, and education staff as well as all staff who work for the three residential care homes. It meets all requirements although it required two minor amendments.

## **Premises of and accommodation at the school**

The school's new, high quality accommodation provides a very safe and inspiring learning environment. This consists of six classrooms including three specialist rooms; one for photography and science, another for design and technology and art and an ICT suite with eight networked computers. All rooms are ideally sized for small-group teaching and extremely well equipped with very appropriate furniture, educational resources and interactive whiteboards. There is ample outdoor space

with both a hard-surfaced fenced court area and a large grassed area with two football goal posts. There is a large open-plan kitchen and dining area which links the school and the residential home. This is used at break time by all students, at lunchtimes as a dining space for boys from the other two homes and as a general meeting area for the twice-daily handovers. The three separate toilets with washbasins for the boys, with separate disabled and male staff toilets, meet requirements. Throughout the school the decor is in pristine condition reflecting the respect boys have for the school accommodation. Students who are unwell or require first aid are looked after by care staff with appropriate provision at their care homes.

## **Provision of information**

Some general information about the education provision is provided on the Apple Orchard website. The school's prospectus, which is part of the residential provision information pack, provides all or reference to the availability of the required information. Parents, carers and others receive detailed and timely written reports about students' progress based on regular assessments. However, the school is not providing the required financial information for local authorities who provide funding for students.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school's complaints policy meets requirements. No formal complaints have been received in the last year.

## **Effectiveness of the boarding provision**

The care provision was judged to be outstanding and national minimum standards were met. A full report on the care provision is available on Ofsted's website and should be viewed in conjunction with this report.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>3</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- provide for students who are registered at the school that are wholly or partly funded by their local authority an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of each student submitted to their

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made)

placing local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 24(1)(h)).

Please see the report on Ofsted's website relating to the care provision in the children's home which should be read in conjunction with this report.

## **What the school could do to improve further**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- Build further on the school's work to provide better opportunities for students to have access to a wider range of vocational qualifications.



## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of students		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs	✓			
How well students make progress in their learning	✓			

### Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of students	✓			

### Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students		✓		
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### The quality of boarding provision

Effectiveness of boarding provision SC068272	✓			
Effectiveness of boarding provision SC013553	✓			

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Residential Special School		
<b>Date school opened</b>	2000		
<b>Age range of students</b>	13–18		
<b>Gender of students</b>	Boys		
<b>Number on roll (full-time students)</b>	Boys: 19	Girls: 0	Total: 19
<b>Number on roll (part-time students)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of boarders</b>	Boys: 19	Girls: 0	Total: 19
<b>Number of students with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 12	Girls: 0	Total: 12
<b>Number of students who are looked after</b>	Boys: 19	Girls: 0	Total: 19
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£368,991		
<b>Email address</b>	martinjim@btconnect.com		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Jim Martin		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mr John Sylvester		