

Orchard Academy

Springfield Boulevard, Springfield, Milton Keynes, MK6 3HW

Inspection dates 25–26 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Strong leadership and management have brought about considerable improvements to pupils' achievement and to teaching since the school opened.
- All groups of pupils make good progress from their starting points. In 2013, standards by the end of Year 6 were average in reading and mathematics.
- Teaching has improved and is securely good, with some that is outstanding.
- Teachers set work that engages the pupils. As a result, pupils show a keen interest in their learning.
- Behaviour is good and sometimes outstanding in lessons and around the school.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average.
- There are good systems to keep pupils safe. Pupils feel safe and very well looked after by staff.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range of additional activities on offer, such as clubs and educational visits.
- The executive headteacher and assistant principals provide very strong leadership and convey high expectations in raising achievement and developing teaching.
- Teamwork among the staff is a clear strength and all strive to do the very best for the pupils.
- Leaders in charge of subjects are beginning to play a full part in school improvement.
- Governors work well, providing both challenge and support to school leaders.
- Productive partnerships have been established with parents. They are very pleased with the education and care provided.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally in lessons, work is not at the right level of difficulty for different groups of pupils.
- Pupils' standards in writing are lower than in reading and mathematics.
- There are not yet enough opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their writing skills in different subjects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 17 lessons. Most of these were seen jointly with the assistant principals.
- Discussions were held with the executive headteacher, staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- Thirty six responses to the online survey, Parent View, were taken into account, together with correspondence from parents.
- Questionnaires from 23 members of staff were analysed.
- The inspectors examined documentation including school policies, information about pupils' attainment and progress, teachers' plans, pupils' work, safeguarding procedures and the school's development planning.

Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Valerie Palmer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized school.
- About a third of the pupils are White British. Other pupils come from a wide range of ethnic heritages, with about a quarter of the pupils from an African background.
- An above average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. Languages spoken in the school, other than English, include Tamil and Somali.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well above average.
- There is a communication department for 10 pupils with language and communication difficulties. All of these pupils have a statement of special educational needs. These pupils are taught in the department and some join lessons in the main school.
- A well above average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school was formally known as Orchard School. It was inspected in 2010 and judged to be satisfactory. Orchard converted to an academy in September 2012.
- There have been several changes to the teaching force since the academy opened.
- The school is led by an executive headteacher who leads two other schools, including a teaching school, and two assistant principals.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching and learning further so that all pupils make rapid progress by:
 - making sure that work is always set at the right level of difficulty for different groups of pupils.
- Raise pupils' achievement in writing by:
 - increasing the opportunities for pupils to apply writing skills in different subjects and topics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils usually enter the school with below average attainment. All groups of pupils, including those from different ethnic backgrounds, are making at least good progress because they receive effective teaching and have positive attitudes to learning.
- By the end of Year 6 in 2013, attainment was average in reading and mathematics, but a little lower in writing. Some groups, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, made outstanding progress from their starting points in Year 2.
- The school's internal assessments, pupils' work in books and the quality of learning seen in lessons show that attainment and good progress are being sustained and built upon.
- Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening because of the well planned opportunities provided for them to discuss their learning. For example, in Year 5, pupils examined and discussed a story from the point of view of its different characters. They made astute observations about the characters in the story and expressed their opinions clearly.
- Reading skills are developing well. There are effective strategies in Year 3 to ensure that pupils' essential reading skills, including phonics (letters and the sounds they make), are secure. Older pupils read widely and apply reading skills competently to their studies.
- Pupils write for different audiences and purposes. Their grammar, punctuation and spelling are developing well. While there are some good examples of pupils' applying their writing skills in other subjects and topics, this practice is not consistently good in all year groups. Pupils' writing in English lessons is often of a higher quality than that in other areas.
- In mathematics, pupils have acquired a good understanding of number and a range of numeracy skills. They apply mathematical knowledge and skills very well to solve challenging problems. For example, pupils in Year 6 used the internet effectively to compare a range common food items in different supermarkets. They solved practical and relevant problems such as where is the best place to buy each item and the best place to buy all the items. They calculated discounts correctly and presented their findings clearly.
- In 2013, the Year 6 pupils supported by the pupil premium attained standards a little higher than the others in reading. However, they were eight months behind the others in mathematics and 10 months behind in writing. Effective action is being taken to close the gap further between these groups. Eligible pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because of effective teaching and the high quality support and guidance provided by teaching assistants.
- Pupils in the communication department make good gains in their learning and in their personal development. They make equally good progress in the department or when learning in main classrooms. Specific planning and support contribute to their success.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as other groups. Those at an early stage of learning English make rapid progress in acquiring language skills because of well-targeted support.
- In 2013, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who reached the higher levels of attainment was lower than average, particularly in writing. Positive action is being taken to extend and stretch the most able in lessons. These pupils are now making good progress and the proportion reaching the higher levels is increasing.
- Pupils develop healthy lifestyles and physical fitness through physical education lessons and the additional sporting opportunities provided, such as athletics and tennis.

The quality of teaching is good

- Leaders have placed considerable emphasis on providing high quality teaching for all pupils. Teaching has been successfully developed and is securely good. It is sometimes outstanding. The good quality teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' rate of progress and on their attainment.
- Teaching successfully engages pupils and promotes good learning for all groups. Teachers establish positive relationships with the pupils and manage them well. Classrooms are attractive, stimulating and promote learning well.
- Teachers' clear explanations and instructions help to ensure that pupils know and understand what they are expected to learn. Pupils' thinking is challenged and their understanding of new learning is checked through teachers' skilful questioning.
- Speaking and listening skills are promoted well in all subjects. Pupils acquire and use new vocabulary with increasing success. The teaching of reading skills, including phonics, is well planned and implemented.
- In the teaching of mathematics, pupils acquire essential knowledge and skills and are provided with interesting and relevant opportunities to apply these in solving problems. However, there are not enough opportunities in all year groups for pupils to apply and develop writing skills in different subjects and topics. This contributes to pupils' achievement in writing trailing behind that in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers are accurate and thorough in assessing pupils' attainment. In most cases, they use this information well to plan their teaching and to set challenging work for different groups of pupils. As a result, pupils are fully engaged in their learning. Their interest is sustained and they make good gains in acquiring knowledge, deepening their understanding and in acquiring skills.
- Occasionally, work is not set at the right level of difficulty. When this happens, pupils' learning can slow down because the work is too easy or too difficult for the pupils.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is successful. Teaching assistants are well deployed and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for those who need additional help with literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils at an early stage of learning English receive specific support and most quickly acquire and apply the skills of speaking English.
- Pupils are set clear individual learning targets in reading, writing and mathematics. They know how well they are doing and know what they need to do to improve. Pupils commented, 'Our teacher tells us what we need to learn.'
- The marking of pupils' work is a strong feature of teaching. Teachers provide encouragement and praise for good work. Constructive and helpful comments guide the next stages of pupils' learning. Pupils told the inspectors how the detailed marking helps their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils show a keen interest in learning and participate in the activities provided with enthusiasm.
- All teachers work together and are consistent in promoting positive learning qualities to pupils, such as curiosity, cooperation, perseverance and reflection. Pupils understand the importance of these qualities and they successfully learn and work on their own or collaboratively as required. In some lessons, particularly in Years 5 and 6, pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are exemplary. Just occasionally, in other year groups, some pupils are less engaged and focused. When this happens, pupils do not learn as well as they should.
- Pupils make good progress in developing personal and social skills. They are courteous, cooperative and show consideration and respect for others. Pupils from a range of ethnic heritages work and play together and thrive in the school's harmonious community.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. As a result, pupils report that they feel safe at school and very well cared for by staff. They remarked, 'Teachers help you and look after you.'

- Pupils have a clear understanding of bullying and its different forms, including name calling and cyber bullying. They told the inspectors, 'Bullying does not happen in our school.' All were clear that any unpleasant behaviour, including bullying, would be quickly dealt with by staff. The school's records show that behaviour is typically good over time and serious incidents are rare.
- Attendance was below average last year. Senior leaders and the learning mentor have taken effective steps to raise attendance, which is now above average.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the opening of the academy, the executive headteacher and two assistant principals have shown considerable determination and persistence in raising pupils' achievement and improving teaching. The three senior leaders provide exceptional leadership and set high expectations for all pupils and staff.
- Senior leaders have established a professional culture among the staff where expertise is shared and there is a united commitment to continuous improvement. Other leaders, governors and staff share the senior leaders' high ambitions and aspirations for the school. Teamwork is a real strength and all strive to ensure that pupils have the chance to do as well as they can.
- The reviewing of the school's performance by leaders is accurate and thorough. Leaders, staff and governors know what the school does well and what needs to be improved. This information is used well to plan action and to bring about improvements.
- Subject leaders are developing their skills well. They are increasingly involved in checking performance, particularly pupil progress and improving their areas of responsibility. Subject leaders are making a clear contribution to raising pupils' achievement across the school.
- Considerable emphasis has been placed on developing the quality of teaching. The school's partnership with a local teaching school has been productive and successful. Teachers have good opportunities to work with colleagues from another school and share best classroom practice. The quality of teaching is carefully checked by senior leaders and external advisers.
- The selection of new teachers is effective and good appointments have been made. There are successful arrangements for appraising the performance of teachers. Targets for teachers are well linked to pupils' progress and to the school's improvement priorities.
- Training and support are provided to help increase teachers' skills. Senior leaders' drive to improve teaching has been a key factor in the school's success.
- An interesting range of subjects and topics is provided to promote good achievement for all pupils. The teaching of reading and mathematical skills is effective and leaders are aware of the need to extend pupils' writing opportunities in different subjects. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the additional activities, such as clubs and educational visits. There are no signs of discrimination. All groups of pupils, including those in the communication department, have full access to the learning activities provided.
- The primary school sport grant has been used successfully to extend pupils' sporting opportunities. Pupils' participation is increasing. This parental comment reflected the school's approach to sport, 'There is a good focus on keeping fit in the school.' A specialist sports coach provides high quality teaching for pupils and has helped develop staff physical education skills.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide eligible pupils with additional support. This is having a positive impact on their achievement.
- The school has worked hard to establish positive partnerships with parents. Parents are very pleased with the care and education provided for their children. They state that their children are happy and safe at school. They are very pleased with the teaching and their child's progress. Parents are also positive about pupils' behaviour and the leadership of the school. These positive views reflect the findings of the inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are enthusiastic and supportive. They show a clear understanding of pupils' attainment and progress, including how well the school is performing in comparison to others. They are well informed about the quality of teaching and how this

has improved. They use this information to challenge the leaders and hold school to account. Governors are familiar with the school's performance management arrangements and ensure that promotion and pay awards reflect the progress that pupils make. They know how the pupil premium funding is used and check the impact on pupils' achievement. The governors have attended useful training to help improve their effectiveness. All safeguarding requirements are met.

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	138605
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	440104

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Marshall
Executive headteacher	Sarah Bennett
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Email address	orchard.school@milton-keynes.gov.uk

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