

The Orchards

Irlam Road, Flixton, Manchester M41 6NA

Inspection dates

9–10 July 2019

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and the local governing body have turned the school around. The Orchards now provides a good quality of education.
- The school is successful at breaking down barriers to learning so that every pupil can achieve his or her best.
- The head of school has a clear vision for the school. She and her enthusiastic leadership team have brought about considerable improvements to the curriculum. It is interesting and fun.
- The local governing body knows the school well. They have been decisive and make a valuable contribution to school improvement.
- Pupils now benefit from a stable staff team. Good-quality specialist teaching throughout the school has resulted in most pupils making good progress.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is evident from their improved attendance compared to attendance at their previous schools.
- Leaders are diligent in carrying out their responsibilities for safeguarding. Pupils feel safe in school and parents and carers agree.
- Personal development and welfare are good. The strong relationships that staff cultivate with pupils means that they know them extremely well. The care and support provided by staff ensure that The Orchards is a safe and nurturing place in which pupils can grow.
- Good teaching in the early years creates a stimulating learning environment and ensures that children have a strong start to school life and make good progress from their starting points.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. Pupils conduct themselves appropriately in class and around school. The school's behaviour policy does not mirror the school's good practice and procedures.
- Leaders and teachers use assessment information well. Occasionally, the learning targets set for pupils are not precise enough to ensure that pupils learn as well as they could.
- Parents feel that communication could be better, particularly about the changes in staffing and the school building.
- The present school building requires further improvement to maximise learning opportunities for pupils and further enhance their welfare.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers improve the quality of the learning targets for pupils, so that targets reflect pupils' needs and next steps in learning more precisely.
- Update the school's behaviour policy so that it mirrors the school's current practice and procedures.
- Leaders and managers should:
 - ensure that parents are kept fully informed about the changes and improvements in school
 - continue to develop the present school building to maximise the learning and further enhance the welfare of pupils while the new school is being built.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and staff have established a school that is making a positive difference to pupils' lives. Together with the whole staff team, leaders have created somewhere that welcomes vulnerable pupils with complex needs and works successfully to reduce their barriers to learning.
- The early development of this school was beset with difficulties in establishing a stable leadership and staffing team. This inevitably had an impact on the welfare and behaviour of pupils. After a shaky start, leaders and governors have worked with urgency and diligence to address the issues. They have transformed the school. The Orchards is now a good place to learn.
- Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Firm, supportive boundaries help pupils to feel secure enough to learn, experience educational success and start to build their self-confidence.
- The school actively promotes equality and diversity. Despite pupils' complex needs, they are encouraged to engender the school values of kindness, care and respect. Every opportunity is taken to 'catch' and celebrate pupils demonstrating these and other qualities. This helps pupils to become compassionate, respectful and tolerant.
- The new leadership team is committed and passionate about improving the school. Staff morale was low in the early days of the school but leaders have earned respect from the present staff team. Now morale is high. All staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire were proud to work at the school and felt they were treated fairly and with respect.
- Leaders accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Their reflective approach is evident in a detailed school development plan. This outlines precisely how leaders will address those areas that need further attention. Leaders have developed effective systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. There is a growing culture of sharing and celebrating individual staff skills and talents in order to improve school practice and learn from each other. Leaders also offer a comprehensive range of professional development and training for staff, including those new to the school.
- When the school was first formed in September 2016, the present school accommodation was thought to be only temporary, while a brand-new school was built. As time has gone by, leaders have worked hard to improve the building. For example, they have installed new pupil toilets and sought to address temperature issues in the school. Although leaders now have confirmation of the start of building work for the new school, the present school still requires some improvements to maximise learning opportunities and enhance the welfare of pupils. For example, it is necessary to create a playground space that can be used in inclement weather and to review the organisation of pupil drop-off and pick-ups in the school car park.
- The school offers a highly personalised curriculum. It is designed around each pupil, according to their individual abilities and learning needs. It is thoughtfully constructed to interest, stimulate and motivate pupils. It focuses on developing key skills such as

communication and cognition as well as developing pupils physically, and in their independence and self-care. The curriculum is often delivered through themes such as recycling. It is further enriched by regular sensory or real-life experiences to aid pupils' understanding and skill development.

- The school offers a good enrichment curriculum. Each Friday afternoon pupils are offered a range of enrichment opportunities such as drama, cheerleading and cookery. Pupils were inspired by a recent visit from a Paralympian. They also loved taking part in the athletics events organised by The Dunham Trust. Pupils commented that they enjoyed the running and seated games, saying that they were 'great fun'. All Year 5 and 6 attended; all received medals and leaders intend to make it an annual event. These opportunities make a significant contribution to the development of pupils' self-esteem.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded through the school's activities. Pupils learn about and, where possible, participate in, activities within the local and wider community. They absorb British values, such as tolerance, respecting differences and the rule of law.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to reduce barriers to learning that are experienced by disadvantaged pupils. The progress of pupils supported by this funding is monitored appropriately. The impact of pupil premium funding is evaluated carefully by the head of school and governors. This enables disadvantaged pupils to be successful and be part of everything the school has to offer.
- The primary school physical education and sports funding is used effectively to provide pupils with a range of sporting and physical activities that they might not otherwise have access to. Leaders use additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively to provide additional staffing and resources to successfully support pupils' individual needs.
- Leaders have worked hard and with some notable success to build relationships with parents, many of whom have children who have joined the school in the last few months. Parents appreciate the work of the school and find staff easy to talk to. However, they are frustrated by the lack of communication about the staff turnover and news on school accommodation and new school build.

Governance of the school

- Governance is provided through the local governing body. It is a relatively newly formed body but governors have been decisive in their actions to address the issues and problems that the school has faced. They created a rapid improvement plan and insisted on fortnightly meetings with school leaders to contribute to accelerating improvement. This has had a very positive impact on the school.
- Governors share a wholehearted commitment to improving pupils' academic, social and emotional outcomes.
- Governors use the range of their experience and expertise to good effect. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and provide appropriate challenge to leaders. They have a good understanding of the school's effectiveness and clear plans to develop the school further. They make a positive contribution to the life of the school.

- They hold the head of school to account, support her in holding staff to account and invest in staff development and training.
- Governors are diligent in carrying out their responsibilities to safeguard pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding policies and procedures are compliant and fit for purpose. Leaders demonstrate a good level of expertise and knowledge of all matters relating to safeguarding and welfare.
- Safeguarding is a high priority in the school. Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from a safe and secure environment by promoting the message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Leaders maintain detailed safeguarding records. Staff, senior leaders and the local governing body undertake regular and appropriate training, including that related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism. The school's safeguarding policy is available on the school's website.
- The school's pastoral support is a strength. Staff consider every aspect of the care that is offered to vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Leaders are very aware of the high level of vulnerability of the pupils in their care. They are persistent in cases where the school is concerned for a pupil's welfare. These are discussed immediately to ensure that risks are minimised and pupils are kept safe. Good relationships with other agencies and with parents ensure that pupils are safe and that their welfare needs are met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The difficulties that leaders have had in the past to establish a consistent, permanent set of staff have been resolved. The quality of teaching and learning is now good.
- Specialist teachers and dedicated support staff work hard to ensure that barriers to learning are broken down. The combination of teachers' knowledge of pupils and their ability to build their confidence has ensured that pupils enjoy learning and make good progress.
- Teachers and support staff work well together, bringing a consistency of approach. They model and reinforce good expectations for pupils' learning and their behaviour. This helps pupils work with purpose and engage in their learning. Pupils' attitudes to learning are typically good.
- Teaching is characterised by warm, trusting relationships between staff and pupils. This provides the security that pupils need.
- Teachers provide pupils with well-prepared and motivating activities. They have a good level of expertise and specialist knowledge of pupils with a diverse range of SEND. Activities are usually well-matched to individual pupils' abilities and interests. For example, an older group of pupils enjoyed learning about fair trade and then designing their own chocolate wrappers. In another class, pupils were captivated by the

sensation of holding and popping a balloon filled with water.

- Teachers' planning for pupils is highly personalised and based on following a curriculum pathway that is particular to individual pupils' ability and needs. The information gathered about pupils is detailed and used to inform learning targets in a range of areas including reading, writing, mathematics, communication and aspects of personal development. This approach is consistently adopted by all teachers. Occasionally, there is a variation in the quality of learning targets across the school. The lack of precision in some learning targets affects how well some tasks are matched to pupils' individual needs. Some pupils do not learn as well as they could.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They use questioning adeptly to give the right amount of challenge at the right time. They do this without putting too much pressure on a pupil, to avoid increasing their anxiety levels. Equally, teachers are quick to realise when a pupil is interested in what they are learning. They take this opportunity to ask more-probing questions, to encourage pupils to think more deeply about their learning.
- Teachers and support staff have effective ways to manage pupils' behaviour. They use regular praise and encouragement to engender a positive sense of self-worth and a can-do attitude to work in pupils. Where needed, they deftly use distraction to intercept the beginnings of off-task behaviour but then quickly get pupils back on track. This friendly approach soon puts pupils at their ease and then swiftly re-engages them back to the activity in hand.
- Developing reading, writing and mathematics skills is a priority in school. Where able, pupils are helped to read through phonics teaching. Pupils are encouraged to write and are supported according to their wide range of abilities to develop their writing skills. Mathematics lessons are popular with pupils. They are well resourced so that pupils have plenty of opportunities to learn mathematical concepts such as addition and subtraction in a practical way. For example, pupils had fun exploring shapes by drawing them in chalk on the playground, while other pupils practised addition and subtraction on a giant 100 square.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Both development and welfare are central to the work of the school. Pupils grow in confidence and enjoy learning because staff know them well, build strong relationships and make the school a safe and nurturing place.
- Staff treat pupils with the utmost consideration and ensure that the school makes everyone feel welcome and valued. Adults model respectful and caring behaviour in the way they engage with pupils. Pupils are happy and calm and learn to behave in a similar caring way.
- Pupils are warmly welcomed by staff at the start of each day. Teachers and support staff use a short session at the beginning of the day to ensure that pupils are composed and ready to learn. This gets lessons off to a strong start.
- Pupils are offered a good-quality personalised personal, social and emotional

curriculum based on their individual needs. It sensitively breaks down pupils' barriers to learning and their often-complex anxieties and fears. There is a focus on giving pupils alternative behaviours and strategies to cope with life and learning. Leaders monitor changes and improvements through learning targets, in order to assess pupils' growing skills and resilience.

- Records show that there are very seldom incidents of bullying in school. If any do occur, they are dealt with immediately.
- Many parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, felt their children were safe and well looked after in school. This was further confirmed by parents who spoke with the inspectors at sports day. They commented that their children were 'happy' and that adults 'were lovely and caring'. Many felt that communication between home and school about their children was good. They commented that 'staff get in touch regularly, so we know how our child is doing'. They particularly like the text, photo and video clip system that the school uses to let them know when their children have achieved something good.
- Leaders make transition a priority to ensure that pupils are prepared for their next steps in education. Central to this is ensuring that their welfare needs are met. Time is spent ensuring that children and families have a positive experience and feel welcomed when they join the school and confident and self-assured when moving on to secondary education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The management of behaviour has been an issue for the school in the past; this is not the case now. Pupils conduct themselves well around school. The school is a calm, orderly place where pupils feel safe and able to learn.
- Movement around the school is carefully and sensitively managed by adults, so there is limited opportunity for negative situations to arise. Pupils are increasingly regulating their own behaviour. Many can now step away from a situation, calm down and then rejoin the group. Pupils say they are proud of the way they manage themselves around school.
- On the occasions when a pupil is in crisis, staff skilfully deal with the incident, helping pupils to calm down and rejoin their activity.
- Staff promote consistently high expectations of behaviour, to which pupils respond well. The behaviour policy is adhered to by all staff and pupils respond positively to their consistent manner. Some of the good practice and procedures that staff employ are not reflected in the school's behaviour policy.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained and supported to establish a safe learning environment in which pupils conform to good standards of behaviour. Pupils value the support they receive from staff and appreciate the measured and caring approach taken by them.
- Behaviour logs are well maintained and regularly analysed by senior leaders and governors. The number of behaviour incidents and exclusions has significantly reduced in the last 18 months. It is now rare for a pupil to be excluded. Leaders only issue exclusions in line with the school's behaviour policy.

- Leaders have established good-quality and effective systems for monitoring absence. Many pupils who attend The Orchards have been non-attenders for lengthy periods of their school careers. Leaders' first challenge has been to get pupils to come to school. They have done this sensitively and with patience and understanding of the anxieties that pupils and their families face. As a result, there have been noticeable successes with many pupils. Their attendance has significantly and rapidly improved; for others it is slowly but positively improving. The school is tenacious with those pupils who still struggle. They are given effective support to encourage them to attend.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Many pupils only joined the school in January 2019. These pupils, along with the more established groups, have settled quickly. Teachers' thorough assessment and the highly personalised curriculum offered to pupils have ensured that pupils' achievement, often from very low starting points, is good.
- The school's tracking indicates that all groups of pupils make good progress. This includes the separate groups of pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, those that have severe learning difficulties and pupils who have autism spectrum disorder, who all make good progress over time. This is confirmed by evidence in pupils' workbooks.
- From their individual starting points, disadvantaged pupils and children who are looked after make similar progress to their peers because of the quality of support they receive.
- Leaders have devised a good-quality assessment system which is effective at capturing the individual progress of pupils in a range of areas. This includes in reading, writing, mathematics and communication. It also includes pupils' physical, behavioural and social and emotional development. Assessment allows leaders to keep a regular check on pupils to ensure that they make enough progress against their learning targets. Parents, and, where possible, pupils, are involved in this process because teachers review and set targets with them. Sometimes these learning targets are not as precise as they could be. Where they are not, pupils are not learning as well as they could.
- Most pupils make good progress in those areas that were barriers to learning in their previous school. Many are regularly attending school for the first time. Pupils make noticeable gains in their confidence and emotional development. Some parents comment that it is good to see that their children are happy and enjoying school when they had been so unhappy at a previous provision.
- Some parents have expressed concern about the progress of their children. In the main, this was because of the frequent staff turnover and worry that new staff must learn afresh about their children. Staffing is much more stable now. Leaders have also put in place an innovative way to ensure that all adults have the essential information they need to help pupils meet their learning and emotional needs. Each pupil has a bag that contains their profile, their learning targets and any learning equipment personal to them, for example to calm them, help them self-regulate or aid their learning. These are in their classrooms or carried around with pupils.

Early years provision

Good

- Children start school with skills and knowledge that are well below the typical starting points for children of their age. Most children have significant difficulty in socialisation and communication. Children thrive and make a positive start to school because the environment is calm and welcoming, adults understand their needs and staff have high expectations. By the time they leave the early years, they are making good progress.
- The early years is run knowledgeably and with confidence. Leaders have a clear view of the strengths of the provision and know how to improve children's learning successfully. These improvements are based on a thorough understanding of children's development and offer the flexibility to adapt the teaching to the individual needs of children.
- Safeguarding is effective and the arrangements mirror those in place for the whole school. Staff are trained well in how to care for and keep children safe. As a result, children's welfare and safety needs are met sensitively by a team of caring adults. Risk assessments are appropriate and the classrooms and the outdoors provide a safe environment, while still allowing children to try out new experiences and take appropriate risks.
- Adults know the children very well. They assess children's abilities, skills and needs prior to them joining the school, so that when they start, personalised provision and learning opportunities are ready and waiting. Assessment information is gathered and used effectively to plan an individual curriculum for children that is both interesting and takes account of their next steps in learning.
- Leaders have ensured that additional funding is used effectively to ensure that disadvantaged children are provided with resources and support so that they make similar levels of progress from their starting points to their peers.
- The quality of teaching is good. Adults are effective in establishing routines quickly so that children begin to build strong relationships with adults. Teachers regard communication skills as very important. The support they give to children to improve their language is very effective. As in the rest of school, it is considered crucial in order to break down barriers to learning and get children ready and willing to learn.
- Provision is well organised to create a rich, sensory-based learning environment for all children both inside and outdoors. A wide range of activities is offered: activities are both stimulating and fun. For example, children were encouraged to feel, smell and taste the ingredients to make cakes. Some enjoyed tasting the fruit while others enjoyed developing their fine motor skills stirring the ingredients in the bowl or cutting up the bananas and strawberries. Children were supported to absorb themselves in the experience of 'going on a bear hunt' while adults expertly kept a clear focus on the aim of the activity for each individual child. This might be as simple as establishing eye contact, following an instruction or being able to verbally retell the story in their own words.
- Adults work hard to establish strong positive relationships with parents. This begins at the time of transition when visits are made to the home and the setting that a child has come from. Leaders offer opportunities to involve parents in their children's learning, by encouraging parents to come into the classroom for 'stay and play' sessions, which

also give parents an opportunity to meet with professionals such as the occupational therapist, school nurse and speech and language therapist.

School details

Unique reference number	142782
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	10087790

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

Type of school	Primary special
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	50
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Paul Reilly
Head of School	Helen O'Brien
Telephone number	0161 7480670
Website	www.theorchards.trafford.sch.uk
Email address	h.obrien@theorchards.trafford.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This small special school opened as a free school in September 2016.
- The school provides education for pupils with a significant degree of complex learning difficulty, many of whom have autism spectrum disorder. Some pupils have severe learning difficulties and a few have profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Just under half of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- Boys outnumber girls.
- Nearly a half of all the pupils on roll are identified as disadvantaged.
- The school works with Trafford local authority, which is the main referral route for placing pupils at the school. Salford, Manchester and Stockport also place pupils in the school.

- The school is temporarily accommodated in the vacated wing of Acre Hall Primary School. It is on the same site as the primary school and shares some playground space and the dining hall. There have been delays in finalising a permanent site for The Orchards. However, this has now been secured and work will start at the end of this month, with the intention that the new school will be ready to occupy in September 2020. In the meantime, leaders have made several improvements to the present school building.
- Early years provision is located in a separate building but at the same school. This building is shared with The Dunham Trust executive team.
- The Orchards is one of five primary schools that make up The Dunham Trust. There is an executive principal who supports school improvement across the trust. The trust has an acting chief executive officer and board of trustees. The school also has a local governing body. A head of school oversees the school's day-to-day operation.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in classes. They observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and assessed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors also observed pupils in the playground and during lunchtimes.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books and in the 'learning journeys' of children in the early years.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive principal, head of school, acting deputy headteacher, a curriculum lead and those responsible for attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The lead inspector met with the acting chief executive officer and a representative of the trustees. She also met with representatives of the local governing body, including the chair. Telephone conversations were held with representatives of the local authority, the department for education and a specialist leader.
- An inspector also met with the school's occupational therapist.
- A small group of pupils discussed their opinions about the school and their learning with an inspector, and inspectors also spoke informally with pupils around school.
- Inspectors took account of the 16 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and spoke informally to staff over the two days.
- They also took account of the nine responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also talked briefly with nine parents during the school's sports day and took into consideration parents' views expressed in a recent questionnaire collected by the school.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documents, including: minutes from meetings of the local governing body; information on pupils' progress; the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding and the school building were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Cole Andrew

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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M1 2WD

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