

The Orchard School

Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire, EN6 1AG

Inspection dates

9–11 October 2018

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| 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 | Not previously inspected |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Effective teaching enables pupils to make good progress, often from very low starting points. Teachers help pupils to develop a much more positive attitude to education and to become more involved with their learning.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are strong and this is the bedrock upon which teachers build their work to improve pupils' outcomes and personal development.
- The promotion of pupils' personal development lies at the heart of the school's work. Pupils grow in self-knowledge and self-esteem. Increasingly, they develop the habits of successful learners.
- Leaders ensure that each pupil has a personalised curriculum based on an accurate understanding of their educational needs, prior attainment and aptitudes. This approach helps pupils to learn and to achieve.
- Teaching is well planned and based on secure subject knowledge. On occasions, the precision with which teachers use technical language is not sharp enough, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils arrive at the school with large gaps in their learning, and their attainment is often well below that typical for their age. Teachers work well to fill these gaps. Nonetheless, many pupils still have some way to go before they catch up fully.
- School leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. They understand pupils' needs and vulnerabilities well. They use this understanding very effectively to keep pupils safe.
- Pupils' attendance improves dramatically once they join the school. Many pupils have a history of disrupted education or high rates of absence. They now enjoy school more and want to attend more regularly. Pupils' punctuality in the mornings, however, is not good enough.
- The proprietor and school leaders have ensured that the school meets the independent school standards and associated regulations. Leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the requirements of running an effective independent school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers support pupils' conceptual understanding by using technical subject vocabulary more precisely, especially in mathematics
 - teaching helps pupils to fill the remaining gaps in their prior learning rapidly, enabling them to make better progress.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that pupils' punctuality at the start of the day improves and valuable learning time is not lost.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of how to meet the independent school standards and other associated requirements consistently over time. They continually seek for means to improve the quality of education provided by the school through secure processes of self-evaluation. As a result, pupils can thrive at The Orchard School, which for many of them is a new experience.
- Leaders are ambitious for their pupils. All pupils have a history of disrupted or interrupted education when they join the school. Nonetheless, leaders are determined to provide an environment where pupils can succeed and go on to lead fulfilling lives.
- Leaders develop a personalised curriculum for each pupil. These individual curriculums are based around pupils' prior attainment, aptitudes and level of academic development on entering the school. This is supplemented by a thorough assessment procedure that pupils undertake on arrival. All this ensures that the curriculum is well designed to meet pupils' individual needs. In addition, the school is well placed to complete personal education plans to meet the deadlines set by the local authorities that place pupils at the school.
- Leaders' curriculum planning is clear and supported by appropriate schemes of work. The focus is on flexible curriculum planning to ensure that pupils' developing needs are met as they settle into the school and grow in confidence. Curriculum plans are drawn up so that they are easily adaptable for occasions when new pupils with different backgrounds join the school, often at short notice.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum enables pupils in key stage 4 to continue with any study towards public examinations that they might have begun elsewhere. This is another example of how the curriculum is flexible enough to adapt to pupils' individual needs.
- The curriculum actively promotes pupils' understanding of the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. This is clearly demonstrated both in pupils' conversation and in their work. In addition, leaders actively promote British values through the curriculum and staff model them in the way they interact with pupils. Due to this successful work, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain and the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils experience good-quality teaching. This has a positive impact on pupils' academic and personal development, in both of which they make good progress.
- Leaders and staff communicate well with parents and carers. They go beyond the requirements regarding provision of information in the independent school standards to ensure that parents have as much information as possible about their children's progress. Parents speak positively about the beneficial impact the school is having on their children's education.
- School leaders work closely with, and draw upon, the support of a larger school in the Cambian Group: Somerset School in Taunton. This allows leaders to enhance the range of the curriculum and provide more opportunities for teacher training and development.

Governance

- The school does not have a governing body. Critical oversight of the school's work is carried out by executive leaders from the Cambian Group, acting on behalf of the proprietor. A regular programme of focused monitoring visits ensures that they are well informed about the school's work. This understanding enables them to challenge school leaders to continue to improve the quality of education provided by the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have established a very secure culture of safeguarding in the school. It is based on a strong understanding of what high-quality safeguarding means in a school of this kind, serving the types of pupils it does. This contextual approach to safeguarding means that pupils are kept safe and feel safe. Systems and procedures are well designed to support this work, as is staff training.
- The school's safeguarding policy is comprehensive and thorough. It pays due regard to the latest guidance issued by the Secretary of State in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2018). The school does not have a website, but makes the policy available to parents on request.
- Leaders quickly corrected some minor clerical omissions in the single central register of pre-employment checks.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers work very hard and very effectively to establish good relationships with pupils when they arrive at the school. These positive relationships provide a firm foundation upon which teachers skilfully build. Consequently, pupils make better progress than they have done at their previous schools. Teachers enable many pupils to experience success and a sense of achievement in their education for the first time.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge across a range of subjects. With only two teachers and one teaching assistant, staff have to cover a wider range of topics than typical for a secondary school teacher but, for the most part, teaching is well planned and challenges pupils. Sometimes, however, teachers' use of precise technical vocabulary is not sharp enough, especially in mathematics.
- When it is at its most effective, teaching motivates pupils to learn well, overcoming any reluctance pupils have to engage with education as a consequence of disrupted experiences in the past.
- Teachers skilfully use pupils' prior learning as a springboard to developing new knowledge to fill the many gaps that pupils have in their learning. With encouragement and ongoing feedback from teachers, pupils start to catch up. Nonetheless, many pupils still have large gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Teachers take every opportunity to promote British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum. Consequently, teaching is making

an important contribution to preparing pupils to be active citizens in modern Britain and for adult life generally.

- Leaders' and teachers' use of assessment is good. It enables staff to track pupils' academic development closely and to put in additional support where necessary. This makes an important contribution to pupils' improving progress. Teachers have a secure understanding of the requirements for success in public examinations.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Promoting pupils' personal development and welfare is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils arrive at the school with a history of disrupted education and negative experiences of school. Staff work well to overcome this legacy and pupils quickly become more positive about learning and more engaged with it. As they grow in self-esteem and self-confidence, pupils increasingly develop the habits of more successful learners.
- Pupils speak very positively about their experience of the school, contrasting it favourably with their previous experiences of education. They say that the school is a friendly place and that there is no bullying. Parents' opinions chime wholeheartedly with their children's.
- Pupils spontaneously speak of how teachers have helped them to understand diversity and issues such as gender equality. This work is preparing them well for life after school.
- Work-related learning and careers guidance play an important part in the personal, social, health and economic education programme. Pupils do work experience that is appropriate to their interests and career goals.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well at the school. This is testament to the work staff do to build positive relationships with pupils. Serious behavioural incidents are very rare. Consequently, the need to use fixed-term exclusions is also very rare.
- Pupils' attendance improves while at the school. They learn to enjoy and value education more than they have in the past and hence they attend more regularly. Many have 100% attendance.
- On the other hand, punctuality in the mornings is not good. Leaders have not been effective in addressing patterns of lateness that vary across the week, being more noticeable, for example, on Wednesdays.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils arrive at the school after very disrupted experiences of education. As a result, all of them have large gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills. Many are currently achieving less than is typical for pupils of their age. Effective teaching results in pupils quickly beginning to fill in these gaps and developing new knowledge to an extent more

appropriate for their age and stage of education. This is especially true in core subjects such as English and mathematics.

- The very small number of pupils currently at the school, and the fact that the majority are recent arrivals, makes generalisations about progress difficult. Nevertheless, pupils' work indicates that they are making progress across the subjects they are studying as part of their personalised curriculum. Over time, pupils acquire secure, new knowledge. Pupils are thus making good progress from very low starting points. Nonetheless, all pupils still have gaps in their learning that remain to be filled.
- For pupils in key stage 4, effective teaching is enabling them to make progress towards completing accredited qualifications, such as GCSEs. Some pupils have already attained qualifications in English and mathematics functional skills as part of this journey.
- Because of their time at the school, pupils' educational prospects improve and they are well prepared to go on to the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- All the pupils at the school are disadvantaged, so the judgements made about outcomes and the impact of teaching in this report are equally applicable to disadvantaged pupils as a group.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 145293 |
| DfES registration number | 933/6008 |
| Inspection number | 10053795 |

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

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| Type of school | Other independent special school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 4 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 1 |
| Proprietor | Anne Marie Carrie |
| Headteacher | Mel Bulmer |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £41,500 |
| Telephone number | 01935 415903 |
| Website | None |
| Email address | orchardschooladmin@cambiangroup.com |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The Orchard School is a small, independent day school. All pupils are placed at the school by their respective local authorities.
- The school is owned by the Cambian Group.
- The school was registered by the Department for Education on 30 November 2017. This is the school's first standard inspection.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector held discussions with the headteacher and the national education lead for the Cambian Group throughout the inspection. He also spoke by telephone to Cambian Group's managing director for education.
- The lead inspector spoke to pupils about their learning and their experiences at the school. He also looked at samples of their work.
- The lead inspector considered a wide range of documentation relating to the school's work, including its safeguarding records.
- In making his judgements, the lead inspector took into account one response to Parent View. He also spoke directly to one parent. There were four responses to the staff survey, which represents all the staff who work at the school.

Inspection team

Stephen Lee, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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