

Inspection of a good school: Orchards Academy

St Mary's Road, Swanley, Kent BR8 7TE

Inspection dates:

1 and 2 July 2021

Outcome

Orchards Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy in this small, welcoming school. They feel safe, well cared for and valued as individuals. Relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect. One pupil expressed the views of many, saying, 'Orchards is unique, we are one community.'

Leaders and teachers have high aspirations for all pupils. In lessons, the calm and focused atmosphere helps pupils work productively. They focus on tasks and are enthusiastic about their learning. Many pupils are keen to share their knowledge and ideas with the rest of their class. Pupils speak or read in front of others regularly. This helps pupils to become confident, resilient learners.

Pupils are proud ambassadors of their inclusive school. One pupil's view mirrors that of many: 'Everyone looks out and cares for one another.' Unkind behaviour and bullying are rare, but if it does happen, staff are quick to sort it out. Pupils have a good understanding of the different faiths and cultures that exist within and beyond their own community.

Leaders' commitment to pupils' personal development shines through. They are determined that pupils should leave Orchards Academy with a well-rounded education. Pupils appreciate the many opportunities to develop their interests and talents.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and governors are determined that all pupils should benefit from the best possible school experience. They make sure that pupils learn a broad range of subjects. Leaders have worked hard to improve the curriculum. In most subjects, leaders have identified the knowledge that they want pupils to learn and the order in which they should learn it. This helps pupils remember their learning effectively. However, leaders have not planned subjects such as geography and art in as much depth. Consequently, pupils are less secure in their understanding of these subjects.

Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to present information clearly. They explain things well. Teachers understand that pupils require practice to learn effectively. Pupils value this as it helps them to remember the important content. Teachers skilfully check how well pupils have understood what they have learned before moving them on to more complex concepts.

Staff are well trained. They understand how to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders and staff know these pupils well. They ensure that they receive effective support to help them learn. This includes working with external agencies and professionals as appropriate. As a result, these pupils achieve well.

Leaders have successfully created an ethos where mutual respect and tolerance are celebrated. Pupils support each other kindly and show a deep understanding of fairness. They are clear that everyone should be treated equally. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils concentrate in lessons. They show positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils speak with pride about their work and what they achieve.

Leaders provide a wide variety of opportunities for pupils to get involved in beyond their studies. Pupils enjoy a range of visits, including to the theatre and to places of historical interest. These visits support and enhance the work they do in lessons. Different eco-projects, such as 'plastics day', help pupils to understand the part they can play in looking after the environment. Pupils enjoy taking on roles of responsibility, such as being a form captain, a prefect or a member of the proactive school council.

Year 11 pupils attended school until mid-June this academic year. Staff remain in regular contact with vulnerable pupils from this year group. Leaders continue to offer support to Year 11 pupils. This includes carefully considered careers advice and guidance. This is helping to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education.

The school is a close-knit community. There is a culture of collaboration and teamwork. Leaders and governors do their very best to ensure that all staff feel well supported and valued. Morale is high. Staff appreciate the efforts leaders make to reduce unnecessary workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong and effective culture of safeguarding throughout the school. The training staff receive helps them spot if a pupil may be at risk of harm. They are quick to report any concerns they might have. Leaders use their expertise to provide effective support for pupils. Leaders follow up concerns with external agencies tenaciously. This ensures that families and pupils get the support they need.

Pupils are confident that staff will listen and support them if they have any worries. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when online and out and about in the local area.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In most subjects, including English, mathematics and science, the curriculum is sequenced precisely so that pupils build their knowledge and understanding over time. However, it is not as well planned in some subjects, such as geography and art. Leaders need to further refine planning in these subjects to make sure that pupils learn the important knowledge they need in all subjects to help them in the next stage of their education.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school [here](#).

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	136304
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10192855
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	542
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	0
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gaenor Bagley
Executive Headteacher	Natalie Willbourn
Website	http://www.orchards-tkat.org
Date of previous inspection	12 July 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is an academy within The Kemnal Academies Trust. The trust delegates some responsibilities to a local governing body.
- Currently, the school does not have students in the sixth form. Leaders plan to reintroduce this aspect once improvements to the school buildings have been made.
- The school has a specially resourced provision of 6 places for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder in Years 7 to 11.
- The school currently uses two alternative providers, Kent Health Needs and North West Kent Alternative Provision Service.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Year 11 pupils were not attending school at the time of this inspection.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, head of school and senior leaders. They also met with the senior director of education from The Kennal Academies Trust and the chair of the local governing body.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding. They also talked to a range of staff and pupils informally.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and geography. They met with subject leaders, carried out lesson visits, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers from the lessons visited.

Inspection team

Louise Walker, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Harry Ingham

Her Majesty's Inspector

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