

Inspection of The Orchard Independent Special School

Unit 1, Sargon Way, Great Grimsby Business Park, Grimsby DN37 9PH

Inspection dates:

4 to 6 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

One pupil told inspectors, 'We're like a big family.' This is a suitable description of the school. Staff work hard to build trusting relationships with pupils, many of whom have not had successful experiences of education before arriving at The Orchard.

Everyone at the school wants the very best for pupils. Leaders' expectations of staff are high because they require all staff to have high aspirations for the pupils. As a result, the school is a place of ambition. The school's curriculum for developing pupils' social skills, so that they are well prepared for adult life, is an important part of what happens at The Orchard. Staff are proud to take their pupils out of school, such as to the seaside at Cleethorpes, to help them build their confidence and help them grow as young people.

Behaviour at school is mostly good. Sometimes, because of the pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), a pupil will have a difficult moment with their behaviour. Staff are effective at managing such situations. Pupils feel safe in school. Bullying is not a problem.

Leaders are tireless and committed to the pupils and the school. However, there are some weaknesses in leadership which need to be improved, including governance and understanding of government guidance about safeguarding and attendance.

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

The curriculum is ambitious. Much thought has gone into its content and organisation. The extent of this task should not be underestimated, considering that pupils arrive at The Orchard at different points in the year, with a wide range of needs, and, often, with large gaps in their knowledge. The curriculum has been planned so that pupils receive the support they need. For example, a phonics-based programme is in place for those pupils who need help with their reading.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. In English, for instance, they teach some demanding, subject-specific language and do so with confidence and accuracy. As a result, pupils are learning some challenging subject content. In science, teachers present learning clearly, engaging pupils well and promoting discussion. In mathematics, teachers make effective use of assessment to identify any gaps in learning or misconceptions and adjust the curriculum accordingly.

Pupils' behaviour is generally good. There is some low-level disruption at times, but this is well managed by staff. All pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Consequently, on occasions, some pupils' behaviour can be challenging. Staff believe that pupils' behaviour is well managed, a view endorsed by pupils who spoke to inspectors. During the inspection, inspectors saw well-established routines in place, positive attitudes to learning and mutually respectful relationships between staff and pupils. Leaders monitor closely all incidents of poor behaviour, across each of the sites, and

have a strong understanding of what is going on in school. As a result, they are able to put appropriate support in place for individual pupils where this is required.

Leaders have placed a major emphasis on pupils' personal development. Indeed, the wider curriculum is a central part of the school's full curriculum offer. Through provisions such as 'The Culture Club' and the 'Social Skills' programme, pupils receive relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education. They learn about fundamental British values, protected characteristics, equal opportunities and diversity. Leaders have implemented an effective careers programme at key stage 4, which includes work experience opportunities and unbiased careers advice. Pupils are provided with opportunities to engage with their wider school and town community, such as making visits to local cafés.

The proprietor body, represented by the executive principal, is deeply committed to meeting the needs of the pupils and improving their life chances. As such, leaders have established a vision and an ethos which creates an ambitious and aspirational sense of purpose across the school. Almost without exception, staff who responded to Ofsted's survey are proud to work at the school, and most feel well supported by leaders.

Leaders have not demonstrated sufficient knowledge and skills to ensure that aspects of the independent school standards are met consistently. For instance, leaders make extensive use of part-time timetables. These are employed for 25% of the pupils on roll. In each case, the use of a part-time timetable is justified. However, although their use is reviewed regularly, there are no end dates in mind and so the arrangement is rolled over indefinitely. As a result, some pupils have been on part-time timetables for several months. This is not in line with the government's expectations for the use of part-time timetables.

Leaders' admissions register is not compliant with requirements. Although it contains virtually all of the necessary information, it does not include details of what changes have been made to it, who made the changes and when. With regard to the attendance register, leaders are not using attendance codes as set out in government guidance. For instance, leaders are not making appropriate use of 'X' and 'C' codes. This means that pupils are often recorded as being absent for authorised, exceptional reasons when their absence is actually unauthorised, and they are recorded as not being expected in school at certain times, which is a code intended for use with pupils who are not of compulsory school age.

The school's advisory panel serves to provide some governance-related support and challenge to leaders. While knowledgeable about numerous areas of the school's work, including health and safety and aspects of safeguarding, the advisory panel does not have enough understanding of the requirements of the government's statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in education 2022' (KCSIE).

Leaders consulted with parents about implementing the statutory guidance on RSE and health education.

The school is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take appropriate action in supporting pupils who need additional help. They make timely referrals to the local authority's children's services where this is required. Appropriate actions are taken when pupils are not in school. Leaders have ensured that the necessary checks are made on adults who work at the school.

Following a serious incident at school, leaders misunderstood the requirements of KCSIE and did not make a referral to the local authority as required by the statutory guidance. The proprietor is taking appropriate action to ensure that policies and practices have been amended to prevent a similar breach in the future. This includes, for instance, arranging further training for staff and inviting the local authority's safeguarding team to support the school's governance arrangements.

The school's safeguarding policy is published on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders did not follow statutory guidance as set out in KCSIE following a serious incident at school. Leaders should ensure that amendments to policy and practice already underway are completed as a matter of urgency, including training for all staff about when and how to report concerns about an adult.
- The advisory panel does not have sufficient understanding of the requirements of KCSIE to enable it to fully support and challenge leaders in matters relating to responsibilities under KCSIE. The proprietor should ensure that plans already underway to involve external safeguarding professionals in supporting the school with governance-related safeguarding matters are successfully completed as a matter of urgency.
- Too many pupils are on part-time timetables for too long. As a result, a sizeable proportion of pupils are not receiving full-time education for extended periods of time. Leaders should review the use of part-time timetables so that pupils are successfully integrated into full-time education more quickly than is currently the case.

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

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

School details

Unique reference number	144366
DfE registration number	812/6005
Local authority	North East Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10212955
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	12 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Orchard Education Ltd
Principal	Michael Burton (Executive Principal)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15,500 to £36,000
Telephone number	01472 898498
Website	www.orchardhumber.co.uk
Email address	info@orchardhumber.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 to 15 March 2018

Information about this school

- The Orchard Independent Special School is based on three sites: Sargon Way, DN37 9PH (the main site), Laceby Road, DN34 5LT and Roberts Street, DN32 8HF.
- All pupils who attend the school have an EHC plan for their SEMH needs. A substantial number of pupils have an autism spectrum disorder.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Material change inspections were carried out in November 2018 and October 2019. These were to, respectively, consider the school's application to be designated as a school for pupils with SEND and to increase the number of pupils on roll.
- Inspectors were made aware during this inspection that a serious incident that had occurred at the setting since the previous inspection is under investigation by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the incident were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- At the Department for Education's request, this inspection was conducted with no notice.
- Inspectors met with a member of the proprietor body who is also the executive principal of the school. Inspectors met with the principal. Inspectors met two members of the school's advisory panel and the externally contracted special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also explored the school's 'Social Skills' programme.

- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors met the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors scrutinised records of safeguarding cases, spoke to a range of staff about safeguarding and spoke with pupils about their feelings of safety at school. Inspectors considered the school's records of the use of restraint, accidents and bullying. Inspectors considered the checks made on absent pupils, on pupils following part-time timetables and when on work experience.
- An inspector spoke with the interim local authority designated officer and representatives of North East Lincolnshire local authority.
- Inspectors took into account the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, parents and staff.
- Inspectors visited all three of the school's sites.

Inspection team

Steve Shaw, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nick Horn	Ofsted Inspector
Suzette Garland-Grimes	Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that the persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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