

Newark Orchard School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130996
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	341080
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	26
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lesley Booth MBE
Headteacher	Mrs Margot Tyers
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2007
School address	Appleton Gate Newark Nottinghamshire
Telephone number	01636 682255
Fax number	01636 682266
Email address	office@newarkorchard.notts.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at school policies, individual education plans, behaviour plans, examination results and pupils' work. They scrutinised 23 parental, 49 staff and 41 pupil questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement of different groups of pupils and how is this moderated
- how well challenging behaviour is managed in the school
- the curriculum focus on the acquisition of basic and social skills, and appropriate accreditation.

Information about the school

Newark Orchard School is an area special school which serves the town of Newark. It is based on two sites a mile and a half apart. All pupils have statements of special educational need. Pupils have a wide range of complex needs, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, physical disabilities and those with emotional social and behavioural difficulties. Many are admitted at the age of 11 after being unsuccessful in the transition from primary to secondary school. A very small number of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and two of these pupils are from the travelling community. Currently, six pupils are looked-after and there is only one, recently arrived, child in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has achieved a wide range of awards including Arts Mark Silver, Sports Mark, Healthy Schools, Basic Skills and Investors in People. The school is an extended school as part of the Grove family of schools. The headteacher was appointed in September 2009.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Newark Orchard is a good school with a happy and welcoming working atmosphere. Pupils are successfully helped to overcome their severe and complex learning and behavioural difficulties. The outstanding level of care and the consistent behaviour management systems enable most pupils to make good progress in their learning, and outstanding progress in their personal development and social skills. The quality of care the pupils receive is a major factor in enabling pupils who have often failed in other schools to rebuild their self-confidence and succeed. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and feel very safe in school. They enjoy their work, behave well and develop in self-esteem. Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics, science, physical education and information and communication technology (ICT). They enjoy practical subjects such as art, music and design technology, where they like making a variety of things and they are able to creatively express their emotions. Teaching is good and staff are committed and dedicated. This is a learning community and all staff are extremely well trained and are engaged in extending their levels of expertise through well organised continuing professional development. Teachers form productive and warm relationships with pupils and manage behaviour well. Effective use is made of skilled teaching assistants to give individual attention where needed. In a small minority of lessons observed, the most able pupils were not given sufficiently challenging work and the pace of learning was too slow. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well, with sufficient emphasis on basic skills, literacy, numeracy and ICT, combined with a good focus on healthy and safe lifestyles. It is enriched with a wealth of practical activities. A weakness in the curriculum is the lack of appropriately accredited courses for older pupils.

The school knows its strengths and what it needs to do to continue to improve.

The recently established senior leadership team is already having a positive impact on the work of the school. There is a shared sense of determination to make necessary improvements. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is accurate but middle managers do not participate in lesson observation and the accuracy of assessment is not as reliable as it should be because there is little rigorous internal or external moderation of levels of achievement. The school works in equal and very active partnerships with other local schools and external agencies to improve provision for pupils. The senior leadership team have planned effectively what the school needs to do to improve further and the capacity for future improvement is good.

Provision for post-16 students is satisfactory and all students go on to positive destinations. However, sixth formers spend too much time engaged in activities, which, although enjoyable, are not sufficiently challenging and do not lead to recognised and

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accredited qualifications.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the accuracy of assessment by rigorous internal and external moderation of levels of achievement.
- Improve provision in the sixth form by extending opportunities for students to work towards gaining appropriate, recognised qualifications.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils make outstanding progress in their social and personal skills. Because of this, they enjoy their lessons. They concentrate well and are keen to learn. They like and respect their teachers and teaching assistants. One pupil described staff as being 'so kind'. As a result, from starting points which are well below average, they make good progress in developing communication skills and go on to achieve units of qualifications, including some pupils who achieved GCSE grades in art and design and performing arts in 2009. Attainment has not been graded in the report due to the nature of the pupils' special educational needs and disabilities.

Pupils who are falling behind in their work are quickly identified and given extra support so they make progress, but pupils who are more capable are not always moved on fast enough or given the level of challenge they require.

The school uses a computer package to analyse the progress made by different groups of pupils and this showed similar achievement between the groups. This was confirmed in the lessons inspectors observed, where different groups were making similar levels of progress. Pupils with particular needs such as language difficulties, hearing or visual impairment are very well supported and, as a result, make similar progress to their peers.

Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles well because they take part in fitness sessions every day. Meals offered by the school are well balanced and pupils understand what is meant by a healthy diet.

All the pupils spoken to say they feel very safe in school and the pupil questionnaires confirmed this. They all have an adult they could talk to if they had a problem and they reported that bullying was dealt with effectively. They know the school rules well and demonstrate this by treating staff and each other with respect. Behaviour is good because of clear guidance from staff.

Pupils contribute well to the school community by acting as school council representatives and taking on responsibilities around the school. They contribute to the wider community by raising money for charity and participating in a range of projects with local schools.

Most pupils are able to apply their basic skills appropriately in a range of contexts. They are developing the independence and personal qualities needed for the next phase of their education or training. As a result of good links with the Connexions service, most

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older pupils have a sensible idea of what they would like to do when they leave school and they recognise the next steps they will need to achieve their goals.

Pupils' attendance is slightly below the national average but this can be largely explained because several pupils have long-term medical conditions and spend periods of time in hospital.

Pupils have a well developed understanding of right and wrong and good spiritual awareness. They care for each other and have a good understanding of other cultures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers know their pupils very well and have good behaviour management skills which they apply consistently. Any incidents of poor behaviour are managed well with the minimum amount of disruption for other pupils. Teachers are greatly supported in their work by well trained and skilful teaching assistants.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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A wide range of methods are used to communicate with pupils, including signs and symbols. Every effort is made to ensure that all pupils, including those with the most severe difficulties, are included in the lessons and different levels of ability are carefully planned for. In practice, this sometimes means that more capable pupils are engaged in tasks which are too low level and their pace of learning is not fast enough.

Pupils' progress is regularly assessed and the results are used consistently to plan future learning. However, a lack of rigorous moderation procedures means that assessment is not as reliable as it should be.

The curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of the pupils. For example, a specially adapted curriculum with intensive support from personal education assistants has been put in place for a group of pupils with extremely challenging behaviour who were at risk of permanent exclusion. This is proving very successful in re-engaging them with the learning process.

A wide range of enrichment activities, such as visits abroad, residential and shopping trips, complement the curriculum, providing good opportunities for pupils to develop personal skills.

Staff know pupils and their families exceptionally well and are very successful in ensuring that pupils are well cared for and kept safe. There are excellent links with a wide range of external agencies such as social services and health professionals. Very good admission and transition procedures ensure pupils settle quickly. Those pupils who have high levels of dependency and require support with mobility, toileting or feeding are cared for sensitively, and with respect for their dignity.

Progress in pupils' personal skills is recorded using personal pathway targets, and pupils know these targets and can comment on the progress they are making. However, pupils are not as clear about their academic targets.

Attendance is monitored carefully and followed up regularly and the school works with parents well to encourage good attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher shows a determination to raise expectations for pupils in the school. The senior leadership team have made great efforts to share their vision for school improvement with other members of staff. This has proved successful and resulted in raised staff morale and a common sense of purpose. The school improvement plan is

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clear and concise, with a good focus on raising achievement for all pupils. Teaching is monitored accurately by senior leaders and support given where weaknesses are detected. Team leaders and subject coordinators are not sufficiently engaged in observing lessons, although they do monitor planning and how well targets are being achieved.

Governors have built up considerable knowledge and expertise about special schools. They use this expertise to support the school well and they are fully involved in evaluating and guiding its work.

Partnerships with local schools are outstanding and have brought benefits and opportunities both for pupils and staff at this school and at the partner schools. An example is the innovation project which is to provide support in the area of autism for a mainstream primary school, and to set up a mixed group of secondary pupils to access courses from the foundation learning tier.

The school adopts good practice across all aspects of safeguarding and has robust and thorough procedures in place. Senior leaders work pro-actively to deal with any situations which may arise. The school's rigorous safeguarding procedures minimise risks to pupils and reassure parents, for example when pupils are going out on visits.

Equal opportunities are promoted well and the school has a very good understanding of pupils' individual needs. However, no formal impact assessment is carried out.

The school has a very good knowledge of the local community and does a great deal to promote community cohesion through making sure pupils understand about other cultures and by offering outreach work with other schools.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle well into the Early Years Foundation Stage because of effective induction procedures. Provision is good and children are very well looked after. There is insufficient evidence to make a specific judgement about outcomes, although the good quality of provision and the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage generate good outcomes overall for children in this age group.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Sixth form

Outcomes for post-16 students are satisfactory overall. The data collected show that students' achievements are broadly in line with their peers in other special schools. Students grow in maturity and confidence and enjoy their lessons. Their attendance is better than in the rest of the school. There is a very caring ethos and students are very well looked after. Regular meetings with a Connexions adviser help them to decide on their next steps, and they participate in a range of relevant activities. However, the curriculum does not allow for able students to access a full range of GCSE or vocational courses and opportunities for accreditation are missed. The school acknowledges this and is planning to improve 14-19 courses in conjunction with its partner secondary school. They have already introduced some elements of the 'Step Up' programme which leads on to the diploma qualification. Leadership and management in the sixth form is sound but lacks focus on raising standards, and while learning is enjoyable and pleasant there is little sense of pace or urgency.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

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Of the 23 parents who returned questionnaires the overwhelming majority feel that their children enjoy school and that they are well cared for and safe. They appreciate all the school does for their children. As one parent writes, 'After coming from a mainstream school, the change and obvious improvement over a short space of time is truly remarkable and is brought about by the obvious dedication and hard work by the staff.' Inspectors' observations support parents' views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Newark Orchard School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 23 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 87 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	83	4	17	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	83	4	17	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	78	5	22	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	74	5	22	0	0	1	4
The teaching is good at this school	20	87	3	13	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	74	6	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	61	9	39	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	13	59	9	41	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	70	7	30	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	70	6	26	1	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	70	7	30	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	16	70	7	30	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	78	5	22	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



6 November 2009

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Newark Orchard School, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 1LR

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school on 4 and 5 November. We enjoyed talking with you. Newark Orchard is a good school. We thought you would like to know what was good about your school.

- you are very happy in school and really enjoy your lessons; you behave well, are polite and friendly and kind to others.
- you are making outstanding progress in improving your behaviour and developing self-confidence and you make good progress in your schoolwork.
- the school is very well led and managed and works well with local schools.
- teaching is good. You like and respect your teachers and teaching assistants and work hard for them, but some of you could manage even harder work.
- you enjoy the good range of sports, arts and other activities provided for you in and out of school hours.
- you told us that you feel very safe in school and are very well looked after; there is excellent care and support for all of you.

This is how we thought the school could get even better:

- senior leaders need to analyse your progress and compare it with other schools to make sure you are all doing your best and to plan for improvement.
- there are too few opportunities in the sixth form for students, who are able, to take GCSE or vocational qualifications.

We wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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