

Orchard School

Filton Road, Bristol, BS7 0XZ

Inspection dates

26–27 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The progress made by older students in mathematics in 2013 was not good enough.
- GCSE results in mathematics are not yet good enough.
- The pace of some lessons needs to be quicker to ensure that students remain interested.
- Teachers do not always ensure that students are given tasks of appropriate difficulty and consistently helpful feedback so that they can improve their work.
- The gap between students receiving pupil premium funding and other students was wide in both mathematics and English in the GCSE results for 2013.
- Students with special educational needs do not all make as much progress as they should.

The school has the following strengths:

- The headteacher, governing body and senior staff have worked relentlessly to establish this new academy and to improve the outcomes for students. They are focused on consolidating the progress made already and raising the achievement of all students. The school is improving rapidly.
- Pupil premium funding has been spent mainly on additional staff to help students to catch up and there is a clear improvement in the progress of these students.
- Progress in English and mathematics is improving and current students are making better progress.
- The school has made improvements by focusing on raising the standard of teaching, which is now good, and ensuring that all teachers are fully informed about every student in their classes.
- Students get on well together and with the adults in the school. The school is working to develop the skills of students so that they take more responsibility for their own learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 teachers in 25 lessons, one of which was observed jointly with a member of the school’s senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made several short visits to lessons and to the school’s special educational needs provision.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, staff and groups of students. The views of the community were explored in discussions with leaders of local community establishments and other agents. An inspector had a conversation with a representative of the local authority and the Academy Trust.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, visited several tutor groups and an assembly, and looked at samples of students’ work. They also looked at progress data, documents about school development and evaluation, safeguarding information and records about attendance and behaviour. The records showing the impact of professional development for staff were also examined.
- The views of parents and carers as expressed in 23 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account. The responses made by staff in questionnaires were analysed.

Inspection team

Ann Cox, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Fran Ashworth	Additional Inspector
Shahnaz Maqsood	Additional Inspector
Robert Smith	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Orchard School is below average in size and serves its surrounding urban area of Bristol. It opened as a sponsor-led academy in September 2012.
- Most students are White British and many other minority ethnic groups are represented in the school. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, which provides additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and those from service families, is well above the national average. Currently the school does not have any children from service families.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is well above the national average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is close to the national average.
- In Years 7 and 8, a fifth of all students are benefiting from additional help in mathematics and English, funded by the government's catch-up programme.
- A higher-than-average number of students join or leave the school at times other than the usual in Years 7 and 11.
- A small number of students attend the Hospital School full time. Some students attend part-time courses at City of Bristol College. For some students, short-term courses with Urban Pursuit, or Fairbridge, run by The Prince's Trust, provide a means of accessing additional support.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement at GCSE and throughout the school by making sure that all groups of students, including those supported by the pupil premium funding, disabled students and those with special educational needs, make progress which is at least good by consolidating improvements already made since the academy opened.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring that a brisk pace of progress is maintained in lessons minimising the time spent by students in recording the lesson objectives
 - providing tasks to students which are appropriate for their needs, not too easy or too hard, to ensure that they are able to make rapid progress
 - marking students' work to provide feedback which is consistently of high quality across the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In 2013 the school's own analyses show that the students in Year 11 had not made as much overall progress as they should have, particularly in mathematics. GCSE results in mathematics did not show a sufficient number students gaining grades A* to C, compared with the most recently available national figures.
- Students in every year group of the school have joined it with levels of attainment in Key Stage 2 which are well below the national average. Most students also have weak literacy skills when they join the school.
- Students eligible for pupil premium support, which is over half of all students, did not make as much progress as other students in both mathematics and English in GCSEs taken in 2013. However, in the lessons observed during the inspection, students eligible for pupil premium funding were making progress at similar rates to their peers.
- The school has focused on improving the quality of teaching and current students are making more rapid progress than previously. Many now in Year 11 have already taken GCSEs in science, mathematics, French and geography and their results show that there is better overall progress with a reduced gap between groups, including for those eligible for pupil premium funding. Where GCSE courses have been completed successfully, the time now available is used to study additional subjects, such as history.
- The school believes that early entry in GCSE mathematics gives students an opportunity to become more confident. For those who completed Year 11 in 2013 and were entered early for GCSE in mathematics, subsequent attempts improved their grades without exception.
- Progress in mathematics has not been as rapid as that in English and the school is now focusing more attention in this area, for example through the appointment of numeracy mentors.
- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs varies. More attention needs to be given to ensuring that all students are helped to make good progress.
- There is no evidence that students from different ethnic minority groups make progress at different rates in the school. For students who speak English as an additional language there is effective support from dedicated teaching assistants.
- The school ensures that all students have equality of opportunity and it actively tackles potential sources of discrimination.
- The work of the school in raising standards in English has been effective. In 2013 the GCSE results in the subject were close to national averages of 2012, despite the below-average starting points for many students. The proportion of A* and A grades gained in 2013 was slightly below the 2012 national average.
- The school has focused on reading and other literacy skills across all year groups with success. Students have below-average literacy skills and this has been a barrier for them. By dedicating learning mentors to literacy and using Accelerated Reader, good progress has been made in tackling low literacy skills, particularly with younger students.
- For the students who receive help from the government's Years 7 and 8 catch-up funding, the use of small-group work has enabled them to make good progress, especially with their reading skills, so they are closing the gap with other students.
- The school's promotion of reading is facilitated by the popular lending library, which is well used by students in their free time, as well as during lesson time.
- Where students have been given alternative provision, for example to study work-related courses, the benefits have been inconsistent and the school is looking carefully to review such provision.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Much of the teaching observed during the inspection was good or better. There has been much investment in improving the standards of teaching with regular and supportive lesson observations and detailed monitoring of students' progress. As a result of improved teaching, students are making more rapid progress, and the achievements of current students are improving.
- The school's own record of observations shows that there have been improvements in the quality of teaching, with a particular focus on eradicating inadequate teaching.
- A strategic plan for providing relevant training for classroom staff has also helped to raise the standards of teaching, with rapid progress since the academy opened.
- The school's relatively new system for giving teachers easy access to information about students allows teachers to plan more effectively by matching tasks more closely to the differing needs and abilities within their classes. This is enabling groups of students, including those eligible for pupil premium funding, to make similar progress to that of other students. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across the school so that in a few cases work is not pitched at the right level for different students, including those who have special educational needs.
- In the best lessons teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject. In an art lesson students made rapid progress because the teacher demonstrated a technique and checked in a variety of ways that students knew what they needed to do. The teacher showed awareness of literacy barriers and helped the students to overcome them.
- A raised focus on reading skills throughout the school and the use of recent pupil premium funding to employ learning mentors are beginning to show benefits in pupils' progress. Similar work with numeracy skills is now under way but the progress in mathematics is currently behind that in English.
- Many teachers have developed good questioning techniques, with the very best examples resulting in students making intellectual effort through probing, high-quality questioning. When misunderstanding is revealed, many teachers are skilled at reshaping tasks so that a new approach strengthens learning.
- Where the pace of lessons was too slow the learning was less effective because the students tended to be distracted. In some cases, too much time was spent in merely recording lengthy lesson objectives, or students were unable to get on with tasks because the teacher spent too much time talking.
- In the best lessons there were good opportunities for self-assessment and group work, with students able to help each other to learn.
- There is some inconsistency in the way that the school's policy for marking and assessment is applied, and this leads to some variation in students' responses and missed opportunities to promote progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- There are good relationships between students and between staff and students throughout the school. In and out of lessons, students are polite and they are generally respectful to each other and to adults.
- In most lessons students concentrate well and show positive attitudes, with little disruption to learning. Students are compliant but they tend to be passive in lessons. Older students are more settled into good learning habits. The school is working to develop the learning skills of all students so that they will become more independent and active learners, and raise their attainment further.
- Attendance is still slightly below the national average but it has improved because the school has taken active steps to encourage good attendance and punctuality.
- Behaviour is managed well; for example the banning of mobile phones and similar devices has been effective. This is considered by the school to be significant in reducing unnecessary distractions from learning during the school day.
- The school has introduced a house system in which students of mixed ages are grouped

together. This has been popular with most students, promoting good relationships between different age groups. The tutor periods observed were productive, although the older students tend to dominate the activities. Many students appreciate the work of their tutors and pastoral leaders in helping them to solve problems.

- The use of better behaviour management has led to big improvements in behaviour as shown by the reduction of reported incidents. There has been a decline in formal punishments and exclusions are rare, being used only as a last resort.
- Students report that they feel very safe in school and parents and carers who contributed to the inspection agree. Bullying incidents are said to be rare, and the students who spoke to inspectors are confident that any matters reported to the school are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Parents and carers also report that their children are happy and well looked after in school, as indicated in Parent View.
- Students are well informed about different forms of bullying and the school takes steps to ensure that anti-social behaviour and unnecessary risks are minimised. Anti-bullying events and updates to students and their families about minimising cyber-safety risks are a regular feature. Students are sensitive about issues, such as racism and homophobic bullying, and they have a good understanding of potential hazards, including alcohol or substance abuse. Discriminatory language and behaviour are uncommon; incidents of extremism are unknown in the school.
- When older students attend courses at other centres, their attendance is carefully checked, as are all aspects of ensuring their safety and well-being. The attendance of students at these centres varies, though most attend well. When they do attend, their behaviour and safety are good.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is resolute in improving the achievement of all students and she works with a determination which is shared by other school leaders and governors. Ambition for the students and high expectations are clearly demonstrated.
- There is a drive to improve the standard of teaching and so to raise standards of achievement. The evidence of improvement is reflected in the good progress currently being made by many students across the school. There is, however, capacity for further improvements to be made.
- The progress made already by the school is being consolidated, with middle leaders having a clear role in monitoring teaching and students' progress. Staff training is specifically targeted at areas which are identified as in need of improvement.
- In recent months senior leaders have developed a highly effective system to collect information about students' progress which is then presented to teaching staff. This valuable tool is allowing teachers to plan effective and personalised lesson activities and is helping to increase the rate of progress.
- The school is aware that it needs to ensure that members of all groups of students make good progress. The support for disabled students and those with special educational needs has undergone some improvements and the school recognises that there is still more that can be done to assist these students.
- The school has invested resources into finding long-term solutions to problems, such as the lower-than-average literacy skills of students. The use of additional pupil premium funding, received in the spring of 2013, has allowed the work to be expanded in the last six months and these improvements are now having a measurable impact on increasing students' rate of progress.
- The school has detailed evaluative information about aspects of its work and has clear goals for improvement. The governing body and all staff contribute to school improvement.
- The school is working with resolve to engage parents, carers and others, with clear communication channels being made available. Work with local community leaders is being used to extend opportunities to engage parents, carers and other members of the local community. The school is particularly pleased with the increased number of students currently in Year 7.

- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced, providing well for the needs and interests of its students. New approaches are being tried to maximise the opportunities for students to gain appropriate qualifications. There is good promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school offers trips to France and Spain and visits to places of cultural interest and invites visitors, whose contributions enhance the students' learning.
- All aspects of safeguarding are fully met.
- Support and challenge are provided by the Trust in Learning, which consists of the University of the West of England, City of Bristol College and Bristol Local Authority. Regular visits are made to the school by the chief executive of the Academy Board, providing opportunities for monitoring and feedback.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is determined to support the school in raising standards and it works very closely with the headteacher and other senior staff. Governors are kept up to date with appropriate training and they are well informed about the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. They scrutinise data about the school's performance and challenge the senior leaders to make changes as necessary. The governing body plays an active part in performance management of teachers and ensures that teachers' salary progression is related to students' achievement and the quality of teaching. Governors scrutinise the school's finances and ensure that the funds available to it are used to raise standards, including the additional support offered by the pupil premium funding. The governing body makes strenuous efforts to engage parents, carers and representatives of the community so that their views help to inform the governors' decisions. The governing body meets its responsibilities with regard to safeguarding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138448
Local authority	Bristol
Inspection number	427597

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	655
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julia Weston
Headteacher	Helen Holman
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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