



Office for Standards  
in Education

# The Orchard School

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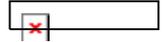
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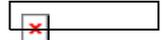
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## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY



### Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

### Information about the school

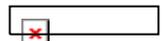


The Orchard School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged between 2 and 16 years. The nursery department, attended by children aged 2 to 5 years, is in a large Victorian house in a residential area of Retford. The upper school is in the village of South Leverton, four and a half miles from Retford. The main school building is a large period farmhouse with a range of single storey classrooms, some recently built, adjacent to it. There is a large sports hall, which is also used as a dining room. The school is set in 24 acres of grounds with paved play areas and sports fields. There are currently 255 pupils on roll, of whom 38 attend part-time. One pupil has recently joined the school with a statement of special educational need funded by the local education authority.

The main aim of the school, as set out in the prospectus, is:

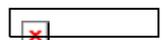
*"to provide a happy, secure environment for its pupils...it is hoped that all children will achieve the best results of which they are capable and that they will respect their fellow pupils and all staff at the school."*

### Summary of main findings



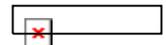
The Orchard School largely achieves its aims. It is a happy, orderly school in which pupils can learn and make good progress. Pupils are friendly and well mannered and the majority go on to further education. It is a successful school with a number of significant strengths.

### What the school does well:



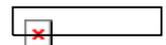
- the school succeeds in promoting among its pupils the values of courtesy and good manners; pupils make good progress, work hard and readily take on the tasks they are given;
- the school is a well ordered and friendly community with good relationships and a happy family atmosphere;
- the staff and pupils are committed to the school;
- the extensive and well-maintained accommodation and facilities support pupils' learning effectively; and
- the school maintains a good range of communication with parents.

**What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations:**

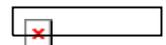


- undertake an urgent review of the provision for a pupil with a statement of special educational need and fulfil its requirements; in the interim the previous review should be obtained and its requirements should be addressed;
- extend the scope and enhance the content of careers education and guidance to provide secondary aged pupils with appropriate information ;
- develop teachers' subject knowledge so that there is a greater awareness of national expectations for primary age pupils;
- systematically collect and use information on pupils' achievements in order to plan more effectively for the next steps in learning, particularly for the higher attaining pupils in the primary phase;
- ensure that due regard is paid to health and safety in all rooms used for design and technology (DT), and that teachers using the equipment are appropriately trained;
- complete an admissions register for the whole school in accordance with statutory requirements;
- develop written plans relating to the admission of pupils with a disability;
- ensure that all staff are checked by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB);
- provide parents with information on the educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements of special educational need;
- submit to the local education authority an annual account of the income received and the expenditure incurred in respect of a pupil funded by them; and
- undertake a fire risk assessment for the nursery and provide a copy on request to the Secretary of State.

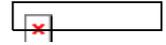
**COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION**



**1. The quality of education provided by the school**



## The quality of the curriculum



The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that covers all the subjects of the National Curriculum and aspects of personal, social and health education (PSHE). High priority is given to the development of basic numeracy and literacy skills, and pupils make good progress in the key skills of numeracy, literacy, speaking and listening.

The curriculum for the nursery-aged pupils is effectively planned around the six areas of learning. Children have appropriate opportunities to learn through play and to undertake practical and investigative activities which help them to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. The staff utilise both planned and impromptu activities well. The nursery curriculum provides a sound basis for later education.

The primary curriculum is supported by schemes of work which take various forms. In some cases they focus mainly on the content to be taught rather than the learning that is intended. These schemes would benefit greatly from further development by including details of the learning objectives, the skills to be developed, the intended outcomes and the assessment opportunities to be taken. Some teachers are attempting to include learning objectives in their planning, but this is not consistent. Planning does not always take account of the wide age and ability range in the class. However, numeracy and literacy benefit from reference to appropriate National Curriculum documents as well as the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies in some classes. French is taught from Year 3.

All secondary pupils study the core subjects, including English, mathematics, double balanced science, religious education and physical education. In Key Stage 3, all pupils take a modern foreign language, often two languages, and there are opportunities to take up to two modern languages in Key Stage 4, with option choices in subjects such as art and information and communications technology (ICT) or design technology (DT). History and statistics are also optional choices in Key Stage 4, but they are very popular, and this year all pupils have chosen to follow these courses. Good provision is made for pupils to acquire key skills in communication and numeracy.

There is developing provision for PSHE. In Key Stage 3, there are two sessions each week to discuss issues of a pastoral nature, but this has yet to be formalised in subsequent years.

There is insufficient careers education which is limited to information on careers in the Year 9 Options evening, work experience in Year 10, and a talk by Connexions in Year 11 followed by individual interviews.

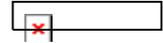
In the senior school, there are several teachers for each of the core subjects, most but not all of whom have specialist qualifications. As in the primary phase, schemes of work are under-developed, as they focus chiefly on curriculum coverage and contain limited information on ways in which teaching and learning could be adapted to suit pupils' individual needs.

The school does not specifically cater for pupils with special educational needs but is developing its policies in this area. At the time of the inspection, there was one pupil with a statement of special educational need. He had only been admitted to the school recently, and the school did not yet have a copy of the statement of his need, or the subsequent annual review.

There is a range of extra-curricular activities which include sports, drama, debating, cookery and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The distance some pupils have to travel to school and the constraints of the school bus system make it difficult for all pupils to participate fully. Those

attending the clubs appeared to be benefiting from the experience.

## The quality of teaching and assessment



While most of the teaching seen was satisfactory or better, a small number of lessons were unsatisfactory. In the good teaching seen there were clear objectives and staff had secure subject knowledge. They used a varied range of teaching strategies, well-targeted questions and paid close attention to the range of ability in the class. In the unsatisfactory lessons, the teaching offered little challenge to the pupils, with activities that went on for too long. In these lessons, there were limited opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their learning. This applies throughout the school but was most evident in the primary phase.

In the Foundation Stage teaching is satisfactory. The nursery is a happy place where pupils enjoy their learning. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed where inappropriate recording work was given to pupils at too early a developmental stage. Nursery pupils are effectively assessed using the Foundation Stage profile.

Teaching in Key Stage 1 is good overall and it is particularly good in Year 1. This was most evident in numeracy where pupils participated in practical group activities, learning the time and the value of coinage through 'shopping' in the class 'shop'. The recent introduction of a teaching assistant is already proving beneficial in the Year 1 class. However, in two literacy lessons there was an over reliance on worksheets to keep pupils occupied. These were insufficiently adapted for the range of ability in the room. Some of the work was narrow in its scope. Relationships are good, pupils try hard and there is a pleasant working atmosphere in the classrooms. Overall, pupils make sound progress.

Teaching in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory and subject knowledge is sound. There is some good teaching and a small amount that is unsatisfactory. Planning is satisfactory but does not always cater adequately for the higher attaining pupils. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and have high expectations of behaviour, which is very good in most lessons. In the best lessons, teachers ask searching questions which require pupils to offer suggestions and justify their answers. Pupils speak confidently in lessons and listen well to each other. Pupils readily engage with the tasks they are given and in most lessons persevere to finish them. Teachers provide good individual support to pupils, but there are few opportunities available for pupils to collaborate in pairs and small groups.

Various, but not all, subjects were observed in the secondary phase. There are examples where pupils make good or very good progress, in statistics, science, mathematics, art, drama and German. In some subjects, for example geography, learning is more limited. Teachers prepare their lessons, but they do not always make the learning objectives explicit. Effective teaching methods and varied activities are used in some lessons. In the best lessons, there is careful explanation, good class discussion, and good learning based on carefully devised activities. In more mundane lessons, pupils have limited opportunity to participate and differentiation is weak. There were some unsatisfactory lessons taught by non-specialists with limited subject knowledge to engage pupils. Some lessons are dull and based on reading aloud from a textbook before the pupils answer questions, with limited encouragement to discuss ideas. Teachers' subject knowledge is sound, but varies from very good to unsatisfactory, whilst resources are adequate.

On entry to the school, National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) tests show that the intake has a high proportion of able pupils. High results are obtained in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations with almost all pupils achieving 5 or more higher grades and an average point score of around 60, well above national averages. Pupils' work is of a good standard in most subjects, including mathematics, statistics, and science, as well as creative

and practical subjects. Achievement overall is good and standards are high at Key Stage 4. Pupils work hard and apply themselves conscientiously to the tasks they are set.

Overall, there is limited evidence to show that teachers effectively utilise the information about the prior attainment, achievements or weak areas of the pupils they teach. Consequently expectations are often lower than they should be. There is limited differentiation in materials or in teaching approach except that those pupils who finish their work more quickly are given additional tasks to complete. Although there is a school policy on assessment it is inconsistently applied by all the teaching staff. They regularly mark the pupils' work but there are insufficient comments to indicate how it might be improved. There are end of year examinations in all subjects devised by staff to assess progress. Use is made of standardised tests, which provide some reference to national averages. However, there is limited evidence to show that this information is used to plan future learning.

### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

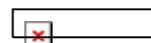
No.

### ***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- ensure that where pupils have a statement of special educational need the education provided fulfils its requirement (paragraph 1.2e);*
- provide appropriate careers guidance for secondary age pupils (paragraph 1.2g);*
- develop teachers' understanding of pupils' aptitudes, needs and prior attainment, and ensure that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 1.3d); and*
- use the information on pupils' achievements more effectively to plan teaching for all pupils, including those of higher attainment in the primary phase (paragraph 1.3g).*

## **2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**



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Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. Their spiritual development is satisfactory. The school's values are clearly set out in its aims.

Behaviour around the school and in lessons is usually very good. Pupils play well together and older pupils mix well with younger pupils on the playground. Most pupils get on well with each other. New pupils to the school comment on how easy it was to make friends. Pupils are aware of school rules and believe that the most important rule is having respect for each other. They are aware of the actions they need to take if they are concerned about bullying.

There are appropriate opportunities for older pupils to develop personal skills through a structured programme for PSHE, religious education and citizenship, which allows them to discuss a wide range of issues. A similarly structured programme does not exist for younger pupils.

Some pupils have additional responsibilities in and around school. The oldest pupils supervise younger pupils at playtimes and the newly formed school council is providing good opportunities for

pupils to put forward views about the school in a more formal way. The pupils welcome this. Younger pupils have limited additional responsibilities, although some classes have monitors. A small number of pupils are elected as house captains.

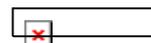
Pupils' social development is very good. After-school clubs, extended visits, the house system, pantomime, harvest festival and other school celebrations provide good opportunities for the development of social skills. Lunchtime is a pleasant daily social occasion. Older pupils work well together in DT developing the skills that allow successful collaboration.

Pupils develop good awareness of other cultures through history, geography, and religious education. They learn about other faiths and communities both here and abroad. Activities arranged to raise money for charitable organisations such as the Samaritan Christmas Boxes, harvest parcels and Bassetlaw Hospice help children to be aware of those who may be less fortunate than themselves.

### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes

### **3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**



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The attention given to the welfare of pupils is very good, based on appropriate supervision of pupils at all times and good pastoral arrangements. Policies on bullying and on discipline are carefully devised and implemented; records of any sanctions imposed are stored in an incident book. A few parents were critical of pupils' behaviour, and a few pupils felt that the school did not deal effectively with cases of bullying, but inspectors found no evidence for this. Child protection procedures are well understood by the named staff, based on a carefully devised written policy.

Policies relating to pupils' health and safety are comprehensive, both for the school site and for educational trips. A risk assessment has been undertaken at the main site but not at the nursery; a safety check should also be undertaken relating to DT. Fire safety measures are good, though the fire officer has not visited after the new building was completed. Regular fire drills are carried out and an appropriate log is kept.

Staff are trained in first aid and there are sound procedures to follow in case of accidents. Though the new building was designed with access issues in mind, the school has yet to formulate a plan relating to the admission of pupils with a disability.

Currently, there are separate admissions registers for the nursery and main school, and not all relevant details are recorded. These should be amalgamated into a single register for the whole school.

### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

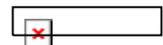
No.

#### ***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *ensure that due regard is paid to safety requirements relating to the teaching of design and technology to meet the DfES guidance 'Health and Safety: Responsibilities and Powers' (paragraph 3.4);*
- *undertake a fire risk assessment at the nursery (paragraph 3.5);*
- *complete an admissions register for the whole school in accordance with statutory requirements (paragraph 3.9); and*
- *develop written plans relating to the admission of pupils with a disability.*

#### **4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**



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The school is privately owned and run by one of the proprietors, who acts as headteacher. The school has been successfully led and developed since its main premises moved to a rural location near Retford. The headteacher maintains a substantial teaching commitment but is supported by a deputy head and senior teachers; with the increase in size, there may be an advantage in delegating some routine financial aspects.

There are established procedures for ensuring that all staff are checked with the appropriate authority for their suitability to work with young people. The school has registered with the CRB for the purpose of undertaking these checks and ensures that relevant documentation is kept securely and systematically, with a policy shared with staff about access to these confidential documents. However, written evidence of CRB checks for the suitability of long-serving members of staff was not available in the school.

Most teachers are appropriately qualified; in the senior school, a few do not have specialist qualifications for the subjects they teach. There are some long-serving staff, as well as a small number who are new; many teachers are also part-time. There have been few opportunities for professional development in modern approaches to teaching. The school should consider reviewing its strategies for identifying the training needs of staff.

#### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

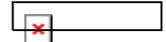
No.

#### ***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *ensure all staff are checked by the CRB (paragraph 4b).*

## 5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The accommodation and facilities at the school support pupils' learning effectively. The nursery is located in a large Victorian house in Retford, adapted for nursery use. There is adequate play space for the number of pupils in several attractive and newly decorated classrooms, the number of toilets is sufficient and the outdoor play space satisfactory.

The main school buildings are of good quality. Orchard Farmhouse is used mainly for classrooms for primary age pupils. There is an ICT room with an adequate number of up-to-date computers that are linked to the Internet and administrative offices. There is also a small reference library. An attractive range of single storey classrooms has been added, some very recently, providing good teaching facilities for class-based and specialist facilities. There are specialist rooms for music, art, drama, design and technology and science. There is a separate sports hall, which is also used as a dining room. The wooden floor in the hall is satisfactory but will soon need attention to maintain its suitability for sports activities. The premises are secure, well decorated and clean. They are warm, light and well ventilated and are cared for by staff and pupils alike. Nonetheless, there were a number of health and safety issues identified by inspectors, which the school must rectify. The tables in the classroom used for DT were not sufficiently secured when stacked against the wall, the pillar drill was not securely fixed to the floor, and the electrical connections did not meet current safety regulations and recommendations. Not all staff who use these specialist rooms have appropriate training. There are sufficient toilet facilities, including a toilet for disabled persons. Classrooms are generally well equipped for teaching purposes and are furnished appropriately for the ages of the pupils. There are many displays of pupils' work, to demonstrate their achievements and celebrate their success.

The extensive grounds are attractive and well maintained. They afford good play facilities with paved play areas and sports pitches.

Wholesome, freshly cooked school lunches are prepared and served in hygienic conditions and many pupils enjoy both the lunch and the social interaction at lunchtime.

The school has plans to extend the accommodation with a new library and DT room.

### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

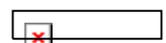
No

### ***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *ensure that classrooms used for DT do not compromise health and safety recommendations (paragraph 5j).*

## 6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



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The school communicates well with parents. A colourful and attractive prospectus gives a clear picture of the school and provides a good range of information. The school has set up a website. There are regular newsletters to parents, a prominent notice-board displayed on the way into school with recent information and notices around the school advertising future events. There is an active Parents' Association, which plans a range of social and fund raising events. The handbook given to every pupil is helpful in outlining the school routines, the complaints policy, information on bullying, the sanctions and rewards used at the school, and domestic arrangements. Pupils who use the school bus have a home contact book, as do younger pupils at the school.

Parents are regularly informed of pupils' progress through a termly system of reports which in the autumn and spring terms focus on effort, behaviour and homework. At the end of the summer term parents have a detailed written report on all aspects of the curriculum, including the exam results.

A relatively high proportion of parents responded to the questionnaire sent out to them before the inspection. They generally showed a high level of satisfaction with most aspects of the school. Over half thought that the school was well run, that their child was making good progress and that the teaching was good. They generally felt that they were kept well informed about their child's progress and that the staff expected their child to work hard and do their best.

Currently there is insufficient information included for parents on the educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements of special educational need. In addition the financial details relating to a pupil with a statement of special educational need that is funded by the local education authority has not yet been submitted to the local education authority. The school has not yet carried out a risk assessment at the nursery, which will need to be submitted to the Secretary of State if requested.

#### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

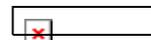
No.

#### ***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

*In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:*

- *provide parents with information on educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements of special educational need (paragraph 6.2f);*
- *submit to the local education authority an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of a pupil funded by them (paragraph 6.7); and*
- *conduct a risk assessment of the nursery and provide a copy of this document on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 6.9).*

#### **7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints**



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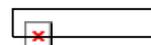
The school has effective procedures for handling complaints. This is clearly laid out in the

parent/pupil handbook, which is given to all parents and pupils on entry. This outlines the procedures to be followed in case of complaint and conforms to the requirements of the regulations.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes

**SCHOOL DETAILS**



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|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Name of school:      | The Orchard School   |
| Type of school:      | Day school   |
| DfES ref. no.        | 891/6015   |
| Status:              | Independent  |
| Age range of pupils: | 2-16 years   |
| Number on roll:      | 255  |
| Gender of pupils:    | Mixed  |
| Fees:                | From £10 per session in the nursery to £1520 per term in the upper school. |
| Address of school:   | South Leverton<br>Retford<br>Nottinghamshire<br>DN22 0DJ                   |
| Email address:       | Pc18@orchardsc.com   |
| Telephone number:    | 01427 880395   |
| Fax number:          | 01777 701628   |
| Headteacher:         | Mrs S M Fox  |
| Proprietor:          | Mr and Mrs Fox and Mr P Atkinson   |
| Reporting Inspector: | Jill Bainton   |
| Dates of Inspection: | 3 - 6 November 2003  |

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