

# Apple Orchard Slinfold

Apple Orchard, Five Oaks Road, Slinfold, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 0RQ

## Inspection dates

28–30 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Sixth form provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher is an exemplary school leader. His ambition for pupils sets the tone for the whole school.
- Safeguarding is highly effective. Leaders and staff are highly tuned in to the vulnerabilities of pupils. The information-sharing culture in the school is a model of excellence.
- Pupils receive exceptional support for their personal development and welfare. Pupils thrive at Apple Orchard.
- Leaders work tirelessly to create a highly relevant curriculum. They respond very well to the requirements of their ever-changing pupils.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those who have missed substantial periods of education, make exceptional progress in all subjects.
- Teaching is highly effective. Staff have very good subject knowledge. They build exemplary relationships with pupils and hold high aspirations for every one of them.
- The oldest students are exceptionally well supported in readiness to leave school, including the most vulnerable. Apple Orchard transforms students' lives.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils describe with pride the transformation in their readiness and willingness to learn.
- Proprietors have a good understanding about the quality of education at the school and are ambitious for the school to be even better. They have great regard and trust in the current headteacher. However, proprietors recognise that they need more effective ways to support and challenge the new headteacher.
- Leaders and staff are developing helpful links with other schools. They do not want to work in a 'bubble'. Leaders want staff to work with other schools to check that judgements about pupils' progress remain accurate.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Implement plans to strengthen links with other schools to support leaders' strategy for checking that assessments of pupils' progress remain accurate.
- Proprietors should refine their approach to holding leaders to account, ensuring that the new headteacher is well supported and challenged.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- The headteacher is a highly knowledgeable, warm and charismatic leader. Pupils, staff and proprietors hold him in the highest regard. His belief that every pupil can succeed, no matter how vulnerable they are, is at the heart of why Apple Orchard continues to offer an outstanding education.
- Leaders have invested significant time and resources in the professional development of staff. A large proportion of current teachers were once teaching assistants in the school. All staff value the wide range of training and development opportunities. They see this element of leaders' work as 'excellent' and say they 'have never worked anywhere like it'.
- Leaders have a clear view of what the school does well. Staff value the guidance and feedback that the headteacher gives them about their teaching and pupils' learning.
- Pupils enjoy school, including those who have had unhappy experiences in education prior to coming to Apple Orchard. Pupils talk of the 'extra mile' that the headteacher and staff go to ensure that they are safe and learning. Pupils could not think of anything the school could do better.
- The curriculum at Apple Orchard is outstanding. Pupils can arrive at the school at any point in the year and at any age, between 12 and 18 years. Some pupils stay for a few years and some for a few months. Some pupils have achieved very well in their previous schools. Some pupils have missed a significant period of education and have suffered overwhelming personal trauma. As a result, leaders place great thought on the learning opportunities they provide to pupils. Leaders and staff ensure that the subjects and life skills that are taught are highly relevant to the pupils' interests, aspirations and abilities.
- Leaders and staff provide an exceptional range of visits that enrich pupils' learning across the curriculum. For example, pupils are given a rich diet of museum visits that give them significant insight into the events that have shaped British society.
- Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. They develop a good understanding of how laws are formed and how they are enforced.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highly effective. Leaders and staff work tirelessly to build pupils' trust and self-esteem. Adults consistently model the highest regard for pupils and this creates a culture where everyone is respected and valued. A well-planned religious education curriculum ensures that pupils develop a strong understanding of world faiths.
- Pupils are very well prepared for life beyond Apple Orchard. The planned curriculum ensures that pupils get invaluable opportunities to develop their life skills. For example, journey planning, personal budget management and opening bank accounts.
- The headteacher and staff are developing good relationships with other schools. Leaders recognise the inherent danger of not being outward looking and working in the 'bubble' of Apple Orchard. Leaders have clear plans to see how other schools judge pupils' progress because they want to make sure that teachers' judgements about pupils' progress remain accurate. They have not had time to put these plans in action.
- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met.

## **Governance**

- There is no governing body. The two proprietors and principal manager oversee the work of the headteacher.
- Proprietors attend the school regularly and ask relevant questions about pupils' progress, safety and well-being. They want the school to be the best it can be. They recognise that they do not have good professional knowledge regarding education and invest in additional expertise to help guide them.
- The principal manager and proprietors hold the current headteacher in the highest regard. They trust their long-standing headteacher. Consequently, proprietors do not have a systematic approach to evaluating the work of leaders. They are thinking carefully about how they will support and challenge the new headteacher.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective.
- Pupils who attend Apple Orchard are highly vulnerable.
- The culture that leaders have created to keep pupils safe is exemplary. Staff are highly alert to the vulnerabilities of pupils. They have an exceptional insight into the risks that pupils can pose to themselves and others. As a result, their diligence in watching and listening to pupils is excellent. The induction of new staff is robust and extremely effective. Consequently, every adult who works with pupils is highly knowledgeable and skilled.
- The communication between school staff and carers at the beginning and end of the school day is exceptional. Pupils value the open and honest culture that leaders have created with regard to sharing information. Staff respond instantly to any potential situation that could lead to pupils being unsafe. Record-keeping is highly effective.
- Leaders and staff assessment of risk is a model of excellence. They work very closely with carers and those who provide therapeutic support. Consequently, the well-being of pupils is at the forefront of every decision that is made, including those relating to work experience and college placements.
- The policies and procedures to keep pupils safe are exceptionally well thought through, understood and implemented. The safeguarding policy on the school's website takes account of statutory guidance.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Outstanding**

- Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary. Staff are highly skilled at balancing the appropriate use of humour with the highest expectations of pupils' conduct. There is great warmth in classrooms and a demonstrable sense of purpose.
- Staff have very good subject knowledge. They are skilled at breaking down language, concepts and skills that mean that all pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, make outstanding progress.
- Staff have the highest expectations of pupils and pupils both value and rise to these.

Written work in all subjects is presented to a very high standard. Staff are clear about what pupils are learning and why.

- Staff know and understand pupils extremely well. They use this detailed knowledge to ensure that planned learning meets pupils' wide-ranging learning needs. Staff habitually check pupils' understanding before moving forward in lessons. Planned learning successfully builds on what pupils know and can do.
- The culture that leaders have created to safeguard pupils ensures that pupils are happy and safe in classrooms. Staff are vigilant and consistent in applying the clearly displayed rules and expectations relating to personal space. Staff respond instantly to new information from carers or leaders regarding pupils' needs.
- Staff ensure that time in lessons is used very productively. No learning time is lost.
- Staff are highly effective at asking searching questions that require pupils to think deeply and reflect widely. Adults create a classroom culture where pupils know it is okay to think before answering questions.
- Pupils hold staff in the highest regard. They value the belief that staff have in them and know that staff want them to achieve the best possible outcomes.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

## **Outstanding**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders and staff have a significant and, in some cases, life-changing impact on pupils' personal development and welfare. Pupils, including the most vulnerable, feel happy and safe in school. They become confident and articulate learners during their time in school.
- The highly specialised therapeutic support for pupils' mental health is valued by all. Leaders work very closely with specialist staff to ensure that there is exemplary partnership working between carers and school staff. Pupils value the culture that promotes openness and transparency.
- Pupils receive very good quality advice about the opportunities they have beyond Apple Orchard. Pupils talk with great pride about their curriculum vitae and records of achievement that the headteacher has helped them with. Leaders ensure that the boys who are able to access valuable work experience. Pupils value the additional responsibility that these opportunities provide.
- The headteacher takes an active lead in the provision for sports and physical education. Pupils take an active part in a wide range of physical activity. They are proud of the many trophies that they have won as a result of their success in both individual and team sports.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils have exemplary manners.
- Classrooms are calm and tranquil places to learn. Older pupils can continue with

personalised study alongside younger pupils because of the sense of purpose within each classroom.

- Lunch and breaktimes are well supervised and pass without incident. Adults have high and clear expectations of pupils' conduct and pupils rise to these.
- Some pupils arrive at school with a history of poor behaviour, exclusion or sustained isolation. The behaviour of such pupils is transformed during their time at Apple Orchard.
- Pupils attend school regularly because they feel safe and value the quality of education they receive.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **Outstanding**

- The most vulnerable pupils, including those who have not felt safe in their previous schools, those who have missed significant periods of schooling, or those who arrive unwilling to engage in education, make exceptional progress.
- Pupils are very well prepared for their next steps in education, training and employment. Staff have a hugely positive impact on pupils' safety, self-confidence and well-being.
- Pupils rapidly develop important life skills, such as the ability to act responsibly and safely in public spaces. Pupils are able to plan a journey, manage money and be successful within work experience and college placements.
- The most able pupils make strong progress and achieve exemplary examination results in all subjects, including those pupils who have previously not achieved well in previous schools.
- Pupils who have missed significant periods in their education or who have SEN and/or disabilities make rapid progress, including in their reading and writing. As a result, these pupils are successful in a range of subjects because they have the basic skills to succeed.
- Pupils make substantial progress across all subjects, including mathematics, science and religious education. The quality of pupils' art work and artefacts that they have designed and made is exceptional.

### **Sixth form provision**

### **Outstanding**

- The headteacher is responsible for the whole school, including the sixth-form students. His leadership is outstanding.
- Leaders have to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of different students, often at short notice because students come and go. Leaders have invested significant time and energy in providing relevant vocational study for those students who cannot attend local colleges. Leaders also learn from the experiences of former students and make appropriate adaptations to the life-skills curriculum. As a result, students are as well prepared as they can be for life after Apple Orchard.
- Some students were not successful in public examinations in their previous schools. However, because they are happy, safe and very well taught at Apple Orchard, these students go on to achieve exceptional outcomes.
- Leaders do all they can to ensure that the most vulnerable students have clear

destinations. This is not always possible. Leaders work incredibly closely with social care services, therapeutic staff and carers to ensure a 'team' approach to planning for students' next steps.

- Students cannot speak highly enough about the quality of teaching. Those who have SEN and/or disabilities value the additional support. The most able students enthuse about the detailed support they get. For example, to learn specific mathematical concepts that they could not grasp in mainstream classes before they studied at Apple Orchard.
- Students are rightly proud of their achievements. As a result of effective careers advice and well-planned work experience, some students are now in paid employment or being asked to take greater responsibility in their voluntary work. The quality of support that students receive is life changing.

## School details

Unique reference number	132069
DfE registration number	938/6258
Inspection number	10026017

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

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	12 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	6
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	John Sylvester
Headteacher	Jim Martin
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,815
Telephone number	01403 783416
Website	<a href="http://www.appleorchard.org.uk/education">www.appleorchard.org.uk/education</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:jim@appleorchard.org.uk">jim@appleorchard.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	12–14 November 2013

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils who have a range of social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Many also have specific learning difficulties. Almost all pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- All pupils are children looked after. Local authorities from across the country place pupils at Apple Orchard because of the specialist therapeutic support they receive.
- The school can cater for 27 boys between the ages of 12 and 18 years.



- The school does not have a governing body.
- Pupils attend registered colleges: Merrist Wood and Brinsbury.
- The headteacher is retiring at the end of 2017.
- The school was last inspected in November 2013.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning across the school, almost always accompanied by a school leader.
- The inspector evaluated work in pupils' books with leaders, and examined leaders' assessment information.
- Meetings were held with leaders and a proprietor.
- Staff views were considered during a meeting and several subsequent conversations took place with members of staff.
- Pupils' views were gathered from a wide range of conversations with individuals over the course of three days.
- The handover at the beginning and end of the school day between carers and school staff was observed.
- A range of documents was evaluated, including improvement plans, curriculum documents, information regarding pupils' progress and complaints logs.
- Documents and processes relating to safeguarding were checked, including the single central record of vetting checks on staff, case study files and risk assessments.
- All the independent school standards were checked during this inspection.

## Inspection team

Mark Cole, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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