



24.04.2026

Dear Families, Carers and Members of our Community,

I am writing to share an update following our recent inspection and to provide a clear picture of where The Orchard School is now and where we are going next.

You will see from the published report that Ofsted judged several areas of the school as 'needs attention', with safeguarding judged to be effective and personal development identified as a strength. The inspection took place under the updated national framework, which places a much sharper focus on the consistency of pupils' day-to-day experience across the school. Within this framework, 'needs attention' reflects that, while there are clear strengths, practice is not yet consistently strong across all areas for all pupils.

Importantly, inspectors recognised that leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's current position and a clear direction for improvement. Across the report, there is recognition of the significant work already underway and the positive impact this is beginning to have.

### **A Safe and Caring School**

Safeguarding remains a clear strength.

Pupils report that they feel safe, know who to talk to and trust the adults around them. Staff are well-trained and vigilant, and systems for recording and responding to concerns are effective. This reflects a strong culture where safety and care are central to everything we do.

### **A Strongly Inclusive Environment**

The Orchard School continues to be a highly inclusive setting where every pupil is understood and supported.

Our therapeutic approach, underpinned by The Orchard Way, ensures that pupils with complex social, emotional and mental health needs are able to access learning, build relationships and experience success. Support for pupils with SEND is well-led and increasingly consistent.



### Improving Teaching and Learning

Teaching continues to strengthen.

We have developed a curriculum that is ambitious and carefully sequenced, helping pupils build knowledge over time. Reading has improved significantly through a consistent phonics approach, and adaptive technology is beginning to support personalised learning.

Our next step is to ensure this strong practice is consistently experienced by every pupil, in every classroom, every day.

### Positive Progress and Outcomes

Pupils make meaningful progress from their individual starting points.

There are clear improvements in reading, and pupils leave with recognised qualifications and positive destinations. All pupils move on to education, employment or training, reflecting our focus on preparing them for life beyond school.

### Behaviour, Relationships and Attendance

There have been clear improvements in behaviour and engagement.

Therapeutic Thinking and consistent relational approaches have reduced incidents and increased time in learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are a real strength.

Attendance remains a priority, particularly for pupils with the most complex needs. We are working closely with families to provide personalised support that helps pupils re-engage successfully.

### Personal Development and Wellbeing

Personal development is a strength of the school.

Pupils access a wide range of opportunities, including outdoor learning, community visits and enrichment activities that build confidence, resilience and belonging. Wellbeing support is embedded across the school for both pupils and staff.

### Strong Leadership and Clear Direction

The school has a clear sense of direction and purpose.

Leadership is focused, reflective and ambitious, with a strong emphasis on coaching, consistency and continuous improvement. Staff are supported to develop their practice, and governors are increasingly effective in their role.



### Looking Ahead

We have a clear and ambitious plan for the next stage of development, including:

- Strengthening consistency in teaching across all phases
- Embedding a whole-school writing approach
- Continuing to improve attendance for our most vulnerable pupils
- Expanding opportunities for pupil leadership and personal development

These priorities build directly on the work already underway and reflect our commitment to continuous improvement.

### Final Message

The Orchard School is a safe, inclusive and improving school.

We are proud of the progress made and optimistic about the future. By working together with families, staff and pupils, we will continue to build a school where every child feels valued, supported and able to succeed.

**Everyone Matters. Everyone Cares.**

Yours sincerely,

*Alistair*

Headteacher  
The Orchard School



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What does the inspection outcome mean for my child?**

Your child continues to attend a safe, caring and improving school. The inspection recognised strong relationships, effective safeguarding and positive progress. The areas identified are already part of our improvement work and will strengthen consistency across the school.

### **Is the school still a good place for my child?**

Yes. The Orchard School remains a highly supportive environment where pupils are understood and cared for. We are clear about what we need to improve and are already taking action.

### **What has the school done well?**

Strengths include safeguarding, inclusion, relationships and personal development. Pupils feel safe, are supported well and make progress from their starting points.

### **What does “expected standard” or “needs attention” mean?**

The updated framework sets a higher and more detailed standard, particularly around consistency. These terms indicate where schools are continuing to strengthen practice so that all pupils have a consistently high-quality experience.

### **Is this similar to an MOT with advisories?**

That is a helpful way to think about it. The inspection confirmed that the school is safe, effective and continuing to improve. It also identified areas where greater consistency is needed across the school. These are not new concerns, but areas we are already working on through our improvement plan to strengthen the experience for every pupil.

### **What will the school improve next?**

We are focusing on:

- Consistency in teaching across all classes
- Attendance for pupils with the greatest barriers
- Writing and foundational learning
- Continued development of behaviour and relational practice

### **Will this affect my child’s day-to-day experience?**

You are likely to see greater consistency in routines, teaching approaches and expectations. This is designed to support pupils to feel secure and succeed in their learning.

### **How are behaviour and safety being supported?**

We use Therapeutic Thinking, focusing on relationships, understanding behaviour and supporting regulation. Staff are well-trained and behaviour is improving.



**What is being done about attendance?**

We work closely with families to provide personalised support, recognising that SEMH needs can impact attendance. Our focus is on building sustained engagement over time.

**How will the school keep improving?**

We have a clear improvement plan, regular monitoring and strong leadership oversight. Staff receive ongoing training and coaching, and governors actively support and challenge the school.

**How can I support my child and the school?**

Maintaining communication with the school, supporting routines and attendance, and sharing concerns early helps us work together effectively.

**Who can I speak to if I have questions or concerns?**

Please contact your child's class teacher or phase leader in the first instance. We value strong partnerships with families and are always happy to talk.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this update, please contact the school office and we will be happy to support.