

Overstone Park School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.^{1, 2} The inspection of registered provision was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.^{3, 4}

Information about the school

Overstone Park is a non-selective independent school for boys and girls aged from birth to eighteen years of age. The school was opened by the current proprietors in 1983 and its main aim is '*the pursuit of excellence and the building of confidence and self-esteem in all pupils*'. There are 74 pupils currently on roll, one of these is above compulsory school age and three have a statement of special educational needs. The school is situated within Overstone Country Park, to the north of Northampton. It is registered for boarding provision but does not currently have any boarding pupils. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a crèche for children aged birth to under three years, a nursery for children aged three and four years and a pre-preparatory class. There are 25 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage; six of these are currently in receipt of the nursery education grant. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and a few speak English as an additional language. The school was last inspected in January 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Overstone Park School provides a good quality of education; it is successful in meeting its stated aims owing to the diligent care and support provided by the headteacher and her staff for all pupils. The curriculum and the quality of teaching and assessment are good, and as a result the progress made by pupils is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as is their behaviour. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils are good and safeguarding requirements are met. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The school has acted well on the recommendations of the last report and now meets all the requirements for registration.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

³ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

⁴ www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2006/ukpga_20060021_en_4#pt3-ch2-pb4-l1g49

Quality of education

The overall quality of education is good. The good curriculum is broad, balanced and takes account of National Curriculum expectations. The provision for basic skills in English, mathematics and science is good and given a high priority across the school. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in physical education and report they particularly enjoy visits to the local leisure centre. The school has extensive grounds which are well used in order to undertake physical education throughout the year.

Clearly structured curriculum plans are in place for all subjects, although they do not always show how the most-able pupils will be challenged or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities supported. Despite this relative weakness in curriculum planning, pupils with statements of special education needs are well served by the curriculum as staff know their pupils very well and tailor learning experiences to meet their individual needs. Good emphasis is given to the teaching of English and as a result pupils achieve particularly well at GCSE level. The school's provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection. Pupils have regular opportunities to develop their ICT skills across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Years 8 and 9 used ICT confidently to research and present their findings as part of an English lesson.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good and ensures that pupils have a secure understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. Pupils enjoy and benefit from a wide range of activities that enrich the curriculum including chess, karate and performing arts groups. A very small minority of parents who responded to the questionnaire would like the school to provide more curriculum based visits. The school has recently introduced BTEC (business and technology education council) courses for older pupils. This has been successful in broadening curriculum options at Key Stage 4. Pupils in Key Stages 4 and 5 have achieved good results in BTEC examinations, particularly in performing arts courses.

The quality of teaching is good and most pupils make good progress. Lessons are well planned and most teachers use a good range of strategies to engage and motivate the pupils. In some lessons, the teaching is more formal in style, particularly where the learning of knowledge is emphasised. In these lessons, opportunities for pupils to develop their skills as independent learners are less well developed. In the best lessons observed, teachers are enthusiastic and pupils settle quickly to their work and learn at a good pace. For example, pupils thoroughly enjoyed preparing for a game of 'Blind Date' in French. In the preparatory class the teacher used effective questioning to assess and challenge pupils' learning. Students report that they would appreciate more opportunities to undertake practical work in lessons. The school is aware that pupils would benefit from fewer worksheets and a wider range of educational visits linked to the curriculum.

The quality of assessment is good. There are well-structured systems in place for tracking pupils' progress. Although there are no formal procedures to moderate assessments externally, work seen in pupils' books and discussions with them during

the inspection indicate that assessments are accurate. Teachers use monthly assessment data to plan work and check that pupils are on track. Those at risk of falling behind are quickly identified and appropriate support put in place. The school keeps detailed individual records of pupils' progress in all subjects, but it is less clear how well pupils are progressing over time. Work is regularly marked with positive comments and, in the best examples, useful guidance given to pupils to help them improve further. Homework is regularly set to consolidate basic skills and extend learning.

Owing to good teaching, caring support and guidance, pupils make good progress in their learning, especially in English, French, physical education and the performing arts. Attainment on entry to the school is highly variable. The latest school data indicates that the large majority of pupils are at expected levels at the end Years 2, 6 and 9 respectively. By the time pupils leave the school attainment is broadly in line with expectations. GCSE results are particularly strong in English Language and English Literature; results in mathematics are improving and good gains are made in modern foreign languages. Some pupils, including those who are more able or with special educational needs and/or disabilities make better than expected progress due to the effective support and guidance they receive.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Personal development is a strength because teachers successfully nurture the abilities of each pupil through praise and high quality care. One parent, typically commented, 'The school has been very supportive and we are pleased and encouraged'. Pupils are proud of their school, enjoy lessons and are enthusiastic about their achievements. For example, pupils talked enthusiastically about their preparations for the end of term production of Peter Pan. Pupils are articulate and well-mannered; their behaviour is good both in lessons and in the playground. Pupils report that the school is like one big family where they have many friends and are cared for well; as a result attendance is high. All pupils are encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility as they undertake jobs such as monitors. Older pupils are democratically elected as head boy and head girl. Alongside the prefects and librarians, the head boy and girl and their deputies take responsibility for organising regular whole school productions, fashion shows, summer fetes and fundraising activities. This contributes positively to their self-esteem and the strong sense of school community. Pupils are well prepared for moving on to the next stage of their education. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. They have a secure understanding of their own cultures and faiths and get on very well together. The good curriculum provides regular opportunities for pupils to learn about different faiths and cultures. As a result, the school is a harmonious community. The good PSHE curriculum provision contributes positively to pupils' knowledge of democracy and being a good citizen.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The school provides a calm and purposeful environment. Small class sizes and good staffing levels mean that pupils are well supervised at all times. Staff recruitment procedures follow national guidance. Good attention is given to health and safety through regular fire evacuations, checks on equipment and first aid procedures. All staff have received appropriate training in safeguarding and the headteacher is due to refresh her training as the designated child protection officer shortly. Pupils report that they feel safe in school and any concerns that they may have are quickly dealt with by staff. Parents also report that they appreciate the safe, caring environment provided by the school. The school provides guidance for sex and drugs education. Healthy break-time snacks of fruit for the youngest pupils, nutritious hot lunches alongside a good proportion of timetabled physical education all contribute to pupils' good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. The school has sensible plans in place to improve accessibility and Disability Discrimination Act requirements are met.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school fully complies with the regulations in respect of the checks made on prospective employees and volunteers, including Criminal Records Bureau checks on their suitability to work with children. The details of these checks are accurately recorded in the required single central register.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is located in a single storey building within extensive grounds in Overstone Country Park. The reasonably-sized hall is well used to enhance teaching. The hall is used for assemblies, as a dining room at lunchtime, for indoor physical education lessons and some practical lessons, such as drama. At the rear of the school is a secure, large hard-surfaced playground and grassed area with climbing equipment. The Early Years Foundation Stage has a separate secure outdoor area. The school grounds include approximately 12 acres of land which are well used for a wide variety of sporting activities. Classrooms are appropriate for the small class sizes. Specialist rooms include a library, art room, music room and ICT suite. The school has improved the facilities for pupils who are taken ill and now meets requirements.

Provision of information

The school has established good links with parents and they are kept well informed about their child's progress through regular written reports and informal meetings. These reports are comprehensive and include a helpful summary of progress in the key areas of learning. The prospectus meets requirements for the availability of information.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a clearly written and fair complaints procedure in place. The quality of the complaints policy has improved since the last inspection and now meets all the requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and the requirements of the Early Years Register for the under-3s are met. Children join the nursery with skills that are broadly in line with expectations for this age. They make good progress, particularly in developing their personal and social skills. Children are encouraged to develop their independence from an early age. For example, during snack time even the youngest children were encouraged to feed themselves. Good attention is given to promoting keeping healthy. For example, the children are provided with nutritious snacks and meals during the day, healthy drinks and good hygiene routines are well established. The crèche, nursery and pre-preparatory classes are welcoming learning environments. They are well resourced and organised, with easy access to the outdoor environment. Routines are well established and as a result behaviour is good. Early Years Foundation Stage staff are adept at keeping useful notes on children's progress and these are used to plan interesting activities. For example, the children particularly enjoyed their regular 'mini rhythm' session where coordination skills were effectively developed in time with music and in a fun way. The school is aware of the need to extend more formal assessment procedures to include the youngest children. Good leadership and management ensure that there is close teamwork between all adults and planning is thorough. Staff work closely with parents and relationships are positive.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- develop curriculum plans that show how the needs of the more able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities will be met
- extend the range of teaching strategies and resources used in lessons to encourage pupils to think and learn independently
- develop assessment procedures that clearly indicate how well pupils are progressing over time.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Non-selective Day School		
Date school opened	1983		
Age range of pupils	0–18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 36	Girls: 19	Total: 55
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 10	Girls: 9	Total: 19
Number of children aged 0–3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 11	Girls: 6	Total: 17
Number of boarders	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 3	Girls: 0	Total: 3
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8091.15		
Annual fees (childcare)	£8112.00		
Annual fees (boarders)	N/A		
Address of school	Overstone Park Overstone, Northampton NN6 0DT		
Telephone number	01604 643787		
Email address	opschool@aol.com		
Headteacher	Mrs M F Brown		
Proprietor	Mrs M F Brown and Mr C Brown		