

Overstone Combined School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110519
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	378115
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2012
Lead inspector	Lynn Alexander

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Varey
Headteacher	Naima France
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 February 2009
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Lynn Alexander Additional Inspector

Nicholas West Additional Inspector

Alastair McMeckan Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons, taught by 10 teachers over a period of 9 hours. They also made short observations of pupils engaged in group work, heard pupils read and observed two assemblies. In addition, meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, the headteacher and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at its self-evaluation documents and plans for improvement, the data collected on pupils' progress, safeguarding information and minutes of meetings of the governing body. They considered the responses from 68 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 8 from staff and 94 from pupils.

Information about the school

Overstone Combined School is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average, as is the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school shares a site with a privately-run children's centre and day nursery that offers a breakfast and after-school club. This provision is subject to separate inspection arrangements.

A serious incident that occurred at the school since the previous education inspection has been investigated by the appropriate authorities and is now closed. Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind. The welfare provision in the school was evaluated against the regulations that are in place and inspection judgements are based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because pupils do not achieve above average standards in English. Pupils’ attainment in writing, although improving, is not as high as it is in reading and mathematics. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress overall, but the next steps in their learning are not always identified precisely so that their progress accelerates consistently.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is above average in mathematics and broadly average in English. When they join the Early Years Foundation Stage children make good progress, which is sustained as pupils move through the school.
- Teaching is good overall. The best teaching features a brisk pace, high expectations and interesting activities. Teachers’ marking usually informs pupils of how well they are doing and what their next steps are in English and mathematics lessons, but this is not as well developed in other subjects.
- Pupils’ behaviour is good. Parents, carers and pupils are generally positive about behaviour, although a few concerns have been raised. There is a consistent approach to the management of behaviour that pupils understand and to which almost all respond well. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and to others. They speak knowledgeably about all forms of bullying and know to whom to turn if they have concerns.
- Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders have set appropriate priorities for the school. Progress is carefully checked by the governing body, which provides comprehensive support and challenge. Rising standards across the school are the result of carefully-targeted intervention and actions taken by school leaders, including the management of performance, to improve the quality of teaching. The curriculum promotes pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to write independently in subjects other than English.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment in writing by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - provide more opportunities for pupils to write independently across the curriculum
 - ensure that the same high expectations of pupils' achievement and quality of written work are reflected in all subjects by making sure that their marking and feedback give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work across the curriculum.
- Sharpen the tracking of progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to ensure that:
 - the next steps in pupils' learning are identified even more precisely so that any additional support provided for these pupils ensures consistently good and improving progress over time.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Nursery with the skills that are expected for their age. They make good progress as a result of the high quality of teaching and provision. By the end of the Reception Year, children's skills are above those expected for their age in all areas of learning. Standards have improved in all subjects in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 over time and are above average overall by the end of Year 6. Pupils' attainment is higher in mathematics and reading than it is in writing.

Most parents and carers think their children make good progress and inspectors agree. This is the result of good teaching and high levels of challenge for pupils. Pupils' reading skills by Year 2 and Year 6 are above average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage demonstrate good phonic knowledge (the linking of sounds and letters). In a Reception class, a group of more-able readers used their skills to rearrange sentences and suggest alternative words. Pupils in Key Stage 1 read to inspectors with confidence, using their phonic skills to read unfamiliar words. In Key Stage 2, pupils used their reading skills well to seek information from a range of sources. Pupils' above-average attainment in mathematics is a result of good teaching that meets the needs of all pupils. This was demonstrated in two good lessons about 'shape' in Key Stage 2, where teachers effectively challenged pupils to apply a range of skills and use mathematical vocabulary. Pupils currently in the school are making good progress and there is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good overall. However, the tracking of their progress is sometimes not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that the next steps in their learning are identified precisely. Consequently, their progress does not always accelerate quickly enough, particularly in writing.

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Quality of teaching

As a result of teaching that is mainly good, with a few examples of outstanding teaching, pupils are achieving well over time. Most parents and carers think their children are taught well and inspectors agree. The teamwork between teachers and their assistants is a significant factor in the good progress pupils make. All adults have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Time is rarely wasted. Inspectors noted the enthusiasm and resilience of pupils towards their learning and their cooperation with their peers. In a guided reading activity in Key Stage 2, pupils discussed persuasive language independently of the teacher. In a Key Stage 1 lesson in mathematics, all pupils were keen to take part in a game called 'duelling digits', where they successfully applied their knowledge of number bonds. In this lesson, the teacher used effective teaching strategies to challenge all pupils. Questions were carefully targeted to match the needs of different groups of pupils. However, although teachers plan a range of activities to meet the needs of most pupils, they do not always focus in their lesson planning on meeting the specific needs of individual pupils with disabilities or those who have special educational needs. Consequently, opportunities are sometimes missed to maximise the use of additional support to address the next steps in learning quickly enough, particularly in writing.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and they have designed a stimulating, cohesive curriculum. It engages and motivates pupils and helps them to develop their skills and knowledge in reading, writing, communication and mathematics. The Big Write programme and a community writing project have provided opportunities to engage pupils in writing. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage were observed acting as the teacher making notes on a clipboard, and writing in the 'Police Station' role-play area. Homework, such as a space project, contributes well to pupils' learning. However, in Key Stages 1 and 2, when worksheets are used in cross-curricular topic work, pupils have insufficient opportunities to write independently and further develop their writing skills. Teachers assess pupils' understanding in lessons, provide constructive oral feedback and mark work carefully. Pupils know their targets and what they need to do to achieve them. In the best teaching, pupils have the opportunity to correct, improve and comment on their work. However, this quality in teachers' marking is not consistent in all subjects. Consequently, the high standards expected in pupils' written work in English are not always expected in other subjects, and pupils do not receive the same level of guidance on how to improve their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils demonstrate the impact of the school's positive promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in their attitudes to each other and to adults. They are polite and welcoming. Pupils enjoy learning. This is demonstrated by their above average and punctual attendance and the good levels of interest and engagement in their lessons. Good relationships between adults and pupils are evident in lessons and around school. Consequently, the school is a cohesive, calm and orderly learning community. The 'Junior Leaders' and 'buddy system' are well received and encourage

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pupils to support each other. The very youngest children play and work together harmoniously, both indoors and outside. Pupils demonstrate a responsible and mature approach in their lessons, for example in paired and group discussions. This reflects the impact of the school's thorough and systematic approach to managing behaviour.

Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They talk with confidence about how to deal with them. They know the difference between bullying and disputes or rough play. They told inspectors that teachers and midday supervisors sort out their problems and never turn them away. They think the school is strict. They like the behaviour reward systems and think that sanctions such as lunchtime detentions are fair. Pupils have a good understanding of the risks they face and how to keep themselves safe in school and outside. They have a good understanding of internet safety and could relate this to mobile phone use. Most parents and carers and pupils think the school keeps children safe and inspectors agree.

A minority of parents, carers and pupils expressed concerns about behaviour and safety and, as appropriate, these concerns were shared with the school. However, a rigorous scrutiny of the school's records shows that most concerns relate to the behaviour of very few pupils. The evidence shows that the school takes appropriate and prompt action and, when necessary, engages support and advice from relevant outside agencies. There are examples of marked improvements in the behaviour of some pupils. The school has robust procedures for risk management and pupils' welfare.

Leadership and management

Strong leadership by the headteacher has encouraged senior and middle leaders to develop and share their expertise in order to continue to improve the quality of teaching. Her rigorous monitoring and effective professional development strategies, including commissioning appropriate external support, have continued to raise the achievement of all pupils and ensured that teachers are held to account. The expertise and commitment of the governing body provide a good level of informed support and challenge. The school has met recommendations for improvement from the previous inspection so that, for example, lessons are sharply focused on clear learning outcomes. The school development plan includes specific criteria for improvement with measurable outcomes. As a result of the school's accurate understanding of its strengths and what remains to be done, it is well placed to continue to improve.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. It effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a wide range of enrichment opportunities that welcome and include the whole school community, such as gardening, music and sewing. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, a good balance exists between activities led by adults and those that children choose for themselves. Key skills are taught well, although there are missed opportunities for pupils to develop and extend

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their writing across the curriculum.

Most parents and carers have a positive view of the school. As one parent commented, 'Whenever I have been concerned about how one of my children is doing, whether academically or socially or emotionally, in school, the staff have been really helpful and supportive.' A minority of parents and carers think that the school does not keep them well informed. Inspectors found that the school makes use of a range of media including modern technology to provide timely reminders and useful information. There is no evidence of any discrimination or inequality in this inclusive and harmonious school. Inspectors examined the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils in detail. They meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



18 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Overstone Combined School, Wing LU7 0NY

Thank you very much for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing you at work and play. We particularly enjoyed talking to you about what it is like to be a pupil in your school, hearing you read and coming to see your lessons. Your parents and carers are pleased with the school. This letter is to tell you that we found that Overstone Combined is a good school.

Here are some of the things that make it good.

- You behave well and you are helpful and polite.
- You work hard and you make good progress all the way through school and the standards you reach are better than in most primary schools.
- You enjoy your lessons and your curriculum topics are interesting.
- You have good school leaders, managers and teachers who make sure you are safe.

To help your school to be even better, we have asked your headteacher and teachers to do two things.

- Give you more opportunities to write by yourselves in your topic work, and make sure that your writing is just as good in your topic work as it is in your literacy work.
- Help you understand more clearly what you need to do to improve your work in your topic books.

You can help your school leaders by continuing your good work at Overstone Combined School.

Yours sincerely

Lynn Alexander
Lead inspector

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