

# Overley Hall 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.

## **Information about the school**

Overley Hall is a special school that is registered for 22 pupils aged eight to 19 years. There are currently 20 pupils aged nine to 19 years on roll, grouped into four mixed-age classes. Pupils have a range of very complex needs, including autistic spectrum disorder, severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and are funded by their local authorities. Thirteen are looked after children. The school admits residential pupils and opened in 1981. It is located in a large Victorian house set in extensive grounds, with a new purpose-built classroom block that opened in 2009. The school was last inspected in March 2009. Its main aim is to: 'provide a happy, safe and secure learning environment where each pupil has equality of opportunity to access a curriculum designed to meet individual needs, and where every member of the school is treated with respect and valued as an individual.'

## **Evaluation of the school**

Overley Hall provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching and assessment are satisfactory, resulting in pupils making satisfactory academic progress. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and their behaviour is outstanding. Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good, and behaviour management and all safeguarding arrangements are excellent. The curriculum is satisfactory because, although broad, relevant and interesting in practice, it is not well enough documented and some provision of information requirements are not met. The school has addressed the small number of weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection and meets most, but not all of the regulations.

## **Quality of education**

The curriculum is satisfactory. The curriculum policy does not provide an accurate summary of the curriculum as provided, and there is no 'strategic plan' to underpin continuity through the year groups or between classes. All four classes include pupils of statutory school age, but this has not been taken sufficiently into account in curriculum planning. Most pupils of statutory school age have statements of special educational needs that specify access to a modified National Curriculum, but not all the required subjects, for example history and geography, are properly covered. Lead class teachers and tutors write schemes of work for each subject taught in their class. While these lack continuity between classes, they provide adequately for the groups for whom they are written. They provide a good basis for learning targets to

be set for each individual in each subject, and effectively support the ongoing assessment of their involvement and progress. The human and social area of learning and careers guidance are not formally planned, and these aspects are not covered in sufficient depth, although they are addressed through other areas of learning.

Nevertheless, the curriculum provides a broad range of subjects including several interesting, additional aspects which suit pupils' interests, needs and abilities, such as Forest Schools work and horticulture. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is planned for and taught in each class, and is very well embedded in the everyday work of the school and home. Parents, carers and local authorities are particularly happy with this aspect of the school's work. Pupils' work is accredited by national bodies, and they undertake work experience and follow college courses when possible. Enterprise activities are now included in the curriculum, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Good use is made of the community and environment to enrich and support pupils' experiences and development.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory. The school is well resourced and the approaches used are up to date and in line with national guidance. For example, a new reading scheme has just been introduced to take account of the recent, national 'Letters and Sounds' approach to reading. Teaching is generally well focused on supporting each pupil's tiny steps of progress and staff have high expectations of pupils to conform and complete their tasks. Technology is used effectively to capture pupils' interest. Communication aids and symbol systems are now used more regularly to support communication and understanding. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Staff show a very good understanding of each pupil's aptitudes and specific needs. Lessons include suitable targets derived from curriculum planning, assessment and pupils' individual education plans. Good advice and support is provided by the speech and occupational therapists and their work, and the outcomes from it inform classroom practice and the objectives specified in pupils' individual education plans.

Conversely, staff do not always challenge pupils enough by questioning or asking for choices, or by expecting self-initiated actions or suitable answers from them. Some sessions include more reward time than active teaching and learning and pupils appear 'occupied' rather than actively learning. In a few lessons, the intended learning is not clear. Pupils are not always given enough autonomy and independence in the classroom although this is better in outdoor work.

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, because of the weaknesses in aspects of provision. Progress is good and often outstanding for individuals in personal development and communication. Provision is not good or better overall because of inconsistencies in teaching and curriculum outcomes. In response to improvements recommended in the last inspection, the school implemented additional systems to record and track attainment and progress over time. However, they are not yet fully effective. The school therefore relies on its established methods which show that

pupils make good progress against the various targets set, but do not yet give a reliable indication of their levels of attainment in relation to national benchmarks.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their calm, settled behaviour and enthusiasm for many activities indicates that they enjoy school and want to be there. Attendance is very high. This was often not the case in their previous placements. Pupils develop outstanding relationships with staff. They are treated with dignity and respect and are encouraged to treat others in the same way. As pupils become happier and settled they increasingly comply and participate. They become proud of their achievements, for example, enjoying recognition when receiving certificates in assembly. Pupils' spiritual development is effectively promoted by the beautiful grounds, calming activities such as watching and listening to a quiet seascape, and the effective development of their confidence and self-esteem. However, opportunities for reflection about concepts taught, such as 'being sorry', are not always sufficiently provided.

The school welcomes pupils and staff from all backgrounds, and pupils' religious and cultural needs are carefully addressed at all times. However, while cultural development is suitably promoted through activities such as art, music, visits and celebrations of festivals such as Chinese New Year, there is no overall plan to support this area of pupils' development.

Pupils' behaviour and social development are outstanding. They improve rapidly due to the school's excellent behaviour management strategies, and the calm, supportive environment. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school community through various eco-sensitive activities. They recycle waste daily, compost leaves and other vegetable matter, and use 'found' materials for art and design. The school also welcomes groups from the community to use its Forest School sites. Most pupils have severely challenging behaviour, but this diminishes as pupils are taught more appropriate ways to communicate. Records and professionals' comments indicate a rapid decline in individuals' behavioural outbursts and the need for restraint. The school helps pupils understand right and wrong by giving immediate praise and appropriate reprimand. Simple token reward charts reinforce good behaviour and achievement. The school is generally a tranquil place in which pupils feel safe and enjoy learning.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Some aspects are particularly strong. For example, policies and procedures are very well written and clearly underpin practice. Child protection procedures are excellent. The child protection policy is supported by numerous additional policies which help keep both pupils and staff safe, such as those procedures regarding personal contact and 'whistle blowing'. All staff training, including in child protection, is up to date and is meticulously recorded. Fire safety and general health and safety are very carefully

addressed, with external reviews regularly sought and acted upon. Records are kept of all required checks and risk assessments are thorough and wide-ranging. The school has an extensive disability access plan that meets requirements, although this concentrates more on premises than on the curriculum and information provided. Incidents and other significant events are always recorded, but sometimes lack sufficient detail.

The staff know each pupil extremely well and there are excellent relationships between them. This supports pupils' personal development and improvement in behaviour very effectively. External professionals and school staff describe many instances of pupils' progress, and these positive views are reflected in the questionnaire returns from parents, carers and local authorities. Family members are welcomed and included at all times, whether to attend a meeting, discuss a particular issue, or just to sit while their child plays, as occurred during the inspection. Pupils are kept safe by close supervision and a high priority on the provision of safe outdoor spaces. The school does much to support pupils' healthy lifestyles, through the provision of good food – much of it home-grown - and outdoor activities.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

All of the required recruitment and vetting checks are made to ensure the suitability of adults, including the proprietor, to work with children. The information is suitably recorded in the single central as required.

### **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The school's premises and accommodation meet all regulations. The new school premises provide a tranquil, spacious environment that supports pupils' learning and calm behaviour very effectively. The site has many additional facilities which contribute very well to pupils' curriculum and learning experiences, both in and out of school time. These include a hydrotherapy pool, workshops, sensory room and a soft play area. The superb grounds provide numerous areas where students feel both safe and free. They include knolls, copses, quiet seating areas, fields and a very large walled garden. The grounds provide extremely well for outdoor learning and support pupils' spiritual, scientific, creative and aesthetic development exceptionally well.

### **Provision of information**

The school has a simple prospectus and website, both of which are clear and attractive. They are currently being updated. Some required elements are not provided and two regulations are not met. These omissions relate to the availability of the safeguarding policy, details about the staff and pupils' academic performance in the preceding academic year, and the provision made for pupils with statements of special educational needs. While the complaints policy is available to parents and carers, the school does not report the number of formal complaints in the preceding

year. Parents and carers are well informed about all matters relating to their children and the school's activities. They, and professionals, are kept up-to-date about pupils' progress and personal development by regular meetings and various reports produced throughout the academic year.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The complaints procedure meets regulatory requirements.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- set out a curriculum policy in writing which is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and implement it effectively (paragraph 2(1))
- give pupils of compulsory school age a full time education with experience in the following areas of learning: linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative (paragraph 2(2)(a))
- ensure that where pupils have a statement of special educational needs, the education provided fulfils its requirements (paragraph 2(2)(e))
- ensure that provision is made for appropriate careers guidance for pupils receiving secondary education (paragraph 2(2)(g)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- make available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils, and on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State, or an independent inspectorate:
  - particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs and for pupils for whom English is an additional language
  - particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations.
  - details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year

- the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 24(1)(b)).
  
- publish the safeguarding children policy (as required under part 3, paragraph 7) on the school's website, or send a copy to parents of pupils, and of prospective pupils, on request (paragraph 24(1)(c)).



## 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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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special school		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1981		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8 to 19 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 15	Girls: 5	Total: 20
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 15	Girls: 5	Total: 20
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 10	Girls: 3	Total: 13
<b>Annual fees</b>	£72,855 - £175,566		
<b>Address of school</b>	Wellington, Telford, TF6 5HE		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01952 740262		
<b>Email address</b>	gillflannery@overleyhall.com		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gill Flannery		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Anita Brown		

**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.**

22 June 2012

Dear Pupils



**Inspection of Overley Hall School, Telford, TF6 5HE**

Thank you for welcoming me when I inspected your school. I enjoyed talking to you and seeing how very well-behaved you were and how much you enjoy your outdoor activities. I came to school to see how well you are learning and growing up, and to make suggestions about how you could do even better. Overley Hall gives you a satisfactory quality of education, and provides very well for your personal development. However, not all requirements are met. These are some of the best things about Overley Hall.

- The school is very successful in helping you to feel less anxious and stay calm so that you can learn more effectively.
- Your behaviour and positive attitudes to work are outstanding.
- All staff care very much about you, and want you to do well and be happy.
- The staff help you to communicate by using symbols and electronic aids more effectively than it used to.
- Some aspects of the curriculum, such as Forest Schools and horticulture, are really interesting and meet your needs very well.
- The school is a warm, safe place, and you and your families are very well looked after and supported.

We have asked the school to improve some aspects of its work. Here are the most important of them:

- improve the curriculum so that it includes everything that it should
- make sure that your parents and carers know about all the information that they can ask for
- improve teaching and assessment so that you learn even better.

You can all help, too, by continuing to work hard, behave well and enjoy yourselves.

Yours sincerely

Judith Charlesworth  
Lead inspector