

Inspection of Overchurch Junior School

Moreton Road, Upton, Wirral, Merseyside CH49 4NS

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils cross the school's threshold eagerly. They are ready to face the day ahead. Pupils enjoy all that the school has to offer, whether this is acting as a play leader, working on the school's allotment or spending time with Tilly, the school dog. They are delighted that the usual after-school clubs and trips are back on the agenda following the lull imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pupils' courteous and considerate behaviour makes the school a welcoming and safe place to be. They follow the school rules without fuss or complaint. Pupils are comfortable and relaxed in each other's company. They show respect to everyone they meet. Pupils view the differences between people as something to celebrate, not as a reason to be unkind.

Pupils trust the adults who care for them. They know that staff will listen to them and treat them equally. Pupils are confident that staff will deal with any incidents of bullying, name-calling or poor behaviour fairly and effectively.

Leaders and staff have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve. However, pupils' progress is uneven across subjects. This is because, over time, the curriculum does not help them to know and remember more.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders have brought about many positive changes to the school. For example, pupils' achievement in some subjects, such as mathematics, is much stronger than it was at the previous inspection. There is much to celebrate. Staff are all on board. They appreciate all that leaders do to avoid excessive workloads. However, the journey to securing a good quality of education for all pupils is not at an end. Currently, pupils' academic success is patchy across subjects and year groups.

The revised curriculum matches the ambition of the national curriculum and meets the needs and interests of all pupils. In some subjects, leaders have made sure that teachers fully understand what content should be taught and emphasised. Essential knowledge is carefully introduced, revisited and checked. Pupils gain secure foundations on which to build new learning. For example, earlier learning ensures that older pupils use grammar, vocabulary and sentence structure confidently and accurately in their written work.

This positive picture is not replicated elsewhere. In other subjects, the key knowledge that pupils should learn, and the order in which it should be taught, are both unclear. Subject leaders have not ensured that teachers have sufficient guidance to help pupils know and remember more. This results in superficial learning. Pupils can talk about what they did in subjects, but they are unable to

recall what they have learned. Pupils' ability to build on what they know and can do is stifled.

Reading enjoys centre stage in the school's curriculum. Pupils read often and they have access to a broad range of quality texts. Even so, the reading curriculum is muddled. Teachers rely too heavily on resources and strategies as a substitute for a clear reading curriculum. This hampers pupils' reading proficiency. The early reading programme is not helping pupils to catch up quickly enough. This is because staff are not well equipped to enable pupils to crack the phonics code. Staff allow those pupils who find reading difficult too much free rein when selecting books. This hinders their fluency, confidence and enjoyment.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in the life of the school. Their learning needs are identified accurately and known by staff. This means that resources are carefully shaped to help these pupils access the same curriculum as their classmates. Pupils with SEND achieve as well as others in the school.

Pupils are keen learners. They are willing to try their best. They move seamlessly from different activities, following teachers' instructions quickly and without fault. Lessons are unhindered by poor behaviour.

The school's 'RESPECT' values are so well ingrained that they are part and parcel of everyday life. Pupils genuinely understand how to treat each other, regardless of any differences. They are keen to play their part in the school community and beyond the school gates, acting as school counsellors, subject ambassadors and donating money to those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are very well prepared to make a positive contribution to British society.

Members of the governing body have reviewed their roles and responsibilities. They have also accessed training to become better equipped to offer leaders informed support and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff are suitably trained to spot the signs that may indicate a pupil is at risk of harm. Leaders act swiftly on any concerns, working with a range of external partners, to ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe within their own community and further afield. They know how to manage the risks when working and playing online. Older pupils understand how to report any concerns that they may have about someone invading their personal space or behaving in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The reading curriculum is driven by strategies and resources rather than a structured approach to help pupils learn what they should. This hinders some pupils from reading as accurately and as fluently as they could. Pupils at the early stages of reading are not catching up quickly enough because the staff who support them do not have the expertise to teach phonics. Leaders should review their reading offer to ensure that teachers understand the key knowledge that pupils should gain. They should also ensure that all staff involved in the teaching of reading, especially those who teach early readers, have the skills and knowledge that they need to help pupils master the phonics code.
- The essential knowledge that pupils need to know and the order in which this is taught has not been carefully considered in some curriculum subjects. This means that pupils do not have secure knowledge on which to build as they move through topics and year groups. Leaders should revisit the curriculum for these subjects to ensure that the content is well ordered and the key knowledge is clearly identified.
- Some subject leaders have had too little influence in ensuring that pupils benefit from an effective curriculum. They have not provided teachers with enough subject-specific guidance to deliver the curriculum. This means that too much is left to chance and pupils' achievement across subjects and year groups is patchy. Subject leaders should ensure that the curriculum is implemented effectively. Senior leaders should make sure that all subject leaders support teachers, so that they have the knowledge that they need to help pupils know and remember more.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	105056
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10204461
Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	356
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Julie McGettrick
Headteacher	Anne Sheridan
Website	http://www.overchurch-junior.wirral.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	16 and 17 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher, deputy headteacher and chair of the governing body have taken up post since the previous inspection.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, other leaders, subject leaders and members of staff. They spoke to five members of the governing body, including the chair of the governors. An inspector spoke with two representatives of the local authority.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and during breaktimes and lunchtimes. They spoke with different groups of pupils to discuss their views of school, their learning, and behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, religious education and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also observed pupils across Years 3 to 6 reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also looked at a number of other subjects on the school's curriculum. Inspectors talked to subject leaders and pupils and reviewed pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers shared through Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. This included the comments received via the free-text facility. Inspectors also spoke to parents at the start of the school day. There were no responses to the pupil and staff survey.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation shared by school leaders, including the school development plan, governors' minutes and leaders' self-evaluation document.
- Inspectors checked the arrangements for keeping pupils safe. They reviewed documentation and spoke to leaders, staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Jo Olsson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Moira Atkins

Ofsted Inspector

David Woodhouse

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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