

Inspection of Overstone Combined School

Church Street, Wing, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 0NY

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their school. Teachers care about their needs and keep them safe. Leaders have prioritised pupils' personal development, and pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs and activities from football to coding. Bullying is rare and if it does happen, adults and anti-bullying ambassadors will sort out any problems.

After a period of considerable turbulence, new leaders have established high expectations and clear routines that support learning. Teachers are working hard to implement these consistently. Many pupils respond to these expectations, but too often pupils' behaviour disrupts the day-to-day life of the school.

Pupils enjoy learning about the world, particularly in the natural environment of the forest school. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, weaknesses in the curriculum mean that too many pupils in key stages 1 and 2 do not achieve well enough. In some subjects, leaders have not precisely selected the knowledge they want pupils to remember. Some teachers do not have secure knowledge in some subject areas. When this is the case, teaching does not help pupils to recall key information.

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

Since the last inspection, there have been many changes of leadership in the school. During this period, expectations and standards of behaviour declined. New leaders have focused on improving behaviour across the school. The number of incidents of poor behaviour has reduced. Specialist staff from the pupil referral unit outreach team have provided staff with important training in behaviour management. Staff have put in place new strategies which they use every day. However, although behaviour has improved, it is not yet good. Too many lessons are disturbed by pupils calling out, becoming distracted and not focusing on their work. During break- and lunchtimes, pupils are closely managed by staff. However, the play is overly boisterous, and a number of pupils find it hard to regulate their own behaviour.

Since the arrival of the current headteacher, the curriculum has been totally redeveloped. The new and ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those with SEND, is broad and inspiring. Leaders are enthusiastic and keen to implement the curriculum because they want the best for pupils. However, in some subjects, leaders have not yet identified the important knowledge they would like all pupils to learn and remember. This means that in some subjects in key stages 1 and 2, the knowledge pupils learn does not build over time and the work for those with SEND is not always adapted appropriately. In some subjects, the knowledge of staff is not as strong as it could be, and this means that they find it hard to identify gaps in pupils' understanding. Therefore, pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Leaders have prioritised reading, and staff have been trained to deliver the carefully sequenced phonics curriculum. Pupils in the early years read to an adult every day and they enjoy the opportunity to practise their new skills. Staff read to pupils regularly and these story times help pupils to develop a wide and interesting vocabulary which they use in their writing. The well-stocked library is at the heart of the school and pupils are keen to talk about their favourite books and authors.

Teachers know their pupils well. Families appreciate the time and care that all staff take to work with pupils to support them through times of trouble. This individualised approach means that staff identify the needs of pupils with SEND quickly and accurately. Leaders are tenacious in seeking support from external professionals to enable pupils with SEND to progress well in their learning and development.

The curriculum in the early years is well designed and skilfully delivered. Children build language well, because it is prioritised by every adult they work with. Children listen carefully to stories and talk with the adults who support them in their play. They quickly begin to develop their understanding of the world. This is because teachers present new knowledge clearly. They provide children with many activities so that they can explore what they have learned further.

The school's work to support pupils' wider development is a strength. Pupils enjoy a variety of carefully planned opportunities that enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This helps pupils to be ready to take the next steps in their education and beyond.

Leaders have established a culture where staff and pupils are encouraged to work hard and show kindness and respect. Teachers are proud to work at the school and know that their work is valued by the leaders who listen to them. Governors undertake their roles diligently and have secured the senior leaders who are leading the school on a journey of improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know who to report concerns to and how to record information accurately on the school's system. Leaders meticulously and promptly follow up concerns they have about pupils. Leaders work hard to support the most vulnerable pupils and families, so they get the help that they need. All staff know about the latest safeguarding updates and the signs of abuse. Governors ensure that policies and procedures are followed. Teachers make sure that pupils are taught age-appropriate content about how to keep themselves safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not precisely selected the knowledge they want pupils to remember over time. This means that teachers do not know what the most important things are for them to teach. Leaders should continue their work to develop their curriculum thinking so that the content and sequence of learning are clear.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is variable in some subjects and some areas of learning. Therefore, teachers do not always spot gaps in pupils' understanding or address misconceptions swiftly. Leaders should ensure that all teachers receive the support they need to develop their expertise.
- There is too much variability in leaders' approaches to the improvement of the quality of education. This means that they do not always accurately evaluate the performance of pupils and take actions to ensure that all pupils achieve well. Leaders should ensure that there is a more coherent approach to improving the curriculum. Additionally, they should provide training for subject leaders so that they can contribute effectively to leaders' work to improve the curriculum.
- Although behaviour has improved, it is still not good in all year groups. Low-level disruption and boisterous play often disturbs the day-to-day life of the school. Leaders should continue to embed the newly introduced strategies so that behaviour further improves.

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.

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	110519
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10241025
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	227
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Co -Chair of governing body	Steve Fuller and Stephen Gates
Headteacher	Kirsty Eales
Website	overstone.eschools.co.uk/web
Date of previous inspection	19 and 20 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has undergone significant changes to leadership since the last inspection. The headteacher took up her post in September 2020.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and computing. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with curriculum 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.

- The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body and leaders of provision for SEND, behaviour and attendance and personal development. The inspectors also observed lunch and break times.
- The inspectors explored the school’s safeguarding culture through considering safeguarding records and procedures, meeting with a range of pupils and staff, and talking to safeguarding leaders.
- An inspector held a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors considered the 59 responses and 48 free-text responses made by parents to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the 21 responses to Ofsted’s online staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. Inspectors gathered pupils’ views.

Inspection team

Lizzie Jeanes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mineza Maher

Ofsted Inspector

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