



Overstone Combined School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110519
LEA Buckinghamshire LEA
Inspection number 278451
Inspection dates 11 October 2005 to 12 October 2005
Reporting inspector Barbara Atcheson AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church Street
School category	Foundation		Wing
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Leighton Buzzard LU7 0NY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01296 688799
Number on roll	224	Fax number	01296 688816
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr David Varey
Date of previous inspection	19 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Naima France

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 11 October 2005 - 12 October 2005	Inspection number 278451
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Overstone is an average sized primary school. Most of its pupils are White British and are fluent in English. Pupils come from a wide range of home circumstances but the number of pupils known to be eligible for school meals is very low. Fewer pupils than usual have learning difficulties or disabilities. Following a period of unexpected change at senior management level, a headteacher was appointed in April 2004 and a deputy headteacher in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school evaluates itself as good. The inspectors judge the school's overall effectiveness as satisfactory with significant strengths. The school's view of itself is more optimistic because its system of self-evaluation is not sharp enough. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory; the school has tackled successfully all the issues from the last report. It provides satisfactory value for money. Standards are good. Most pupils make steady progress, although that of the more able pupils is not consistent across the school. Teaching is satisfactory and teachers provide a variety of activities that engage most pupils. However, the tasks set do not always make sufficient use of assessment information in order to provide higher attaining pupils with sufficient challenge in their work. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is good and most pupils exceed the learning goals expected of five-year-olds. Pupils' personal development is outstanding and as a result the atmosphere in the school is very positive. All staff work very hard to make every child feel valued. The views of staff, pupils and parents are sought, listened to and acted upon. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and the leadership of the headteacher is particularly effective. There is a committed staff team who work hard to implement change, but not all subject co-ordinators are yet fully effective in carrying out the full range of their responsibilities. Partnership with other schools and organisations is good, as is the climate for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

* Use information on pupils' progress to set clear targets for their next steps in learning* Make sure teachers always include activities to challenge and extend the more able pupils in their lessons* Improve teachers' skills in leading and managing their area of responsibility, to ensure accuracy of the school's evaluation of its effectiveness.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Most children start school with better than average levels of skill in all areas of learning. In the Foundation Stage children make good progress because they are taught well. Each stage of their development is carefully checked. By the end of their reception year, most have exceeded the learning goals. In the national tests of 2004 for seven year olds, pupils' results compared favourably with the national picture. Performance in mathematics was stronger than in reading and writing. In 2004 the Year 6 pupils attained standards that were well above average. This year standards are not as high. In discussion, some more able pupils say that they find their work too easy. Observations in lessons and a scrutiny of their work confirm that this is the case, showing that these pupils are not always provided with sufficient challenge and consequently do not always progress as well as they might. The best progress is made by those with learning

difficulties. This is because their needs are carefully assessed and they are taught effectively so that they meet the goals set out in their individual education plans.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being is outstanding. The school is a highly orderly and hardworking community. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to stay safe, and lead healthy lifestyles because they are provided with a comprehensive personal, social and health education programme and extra-curricular sports clubs. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is very good. Spiritual development is promoted well in assemblies and appropriately emphasised in lessons and across the curriculum. Their social development is outstanding because pupils show great respect for the feelings and beliefs of others, and have an extremely clear sense of right and wrong. Pupils have a good understanding of different cultural traditions. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Attendance is very good. Pupils' relationships with each other and staff are extremely good, reflecting the strong emphasis which the school places on their personal development. They play happily together and say that instances of bullying or aggressive behaviour are very rare. Pupils make good use of their social skills in their day-to-day lives and this provides a good platform for continued progress when pupils move to their secondary schools. Pupils are very good at using their initiative, acting as 'buddies' to befriend others at playtime and running a school shop. They behave responsibly and without any need for direct supervision. They also have very good links with the senior citizens in the village for whom they organise an annual tea party.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school's view that the quality of teaching is good is not borne out by inspection evidence. Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. Teachers in the reception and nursery classes are skilled at monitoring pupils' progress and matching work to their needs. In addition, they cover the curriculum thoroughly and help children to work independently. This gives them a positive start to their education. Some teaching in Years 1 to 6 is good because teachers build on their excellent relationships with pupils to create a good climate for learning. They provide a variety of activities that capture pupils' interest and enthusiasm and help them to sustain their concentration. Lessons generally are planned appropriately and build on what pupils have learnt before. Teachers make the best of the pupils' really positive attitudes and behaviour so pupils work conscientiously and try their best. Social skills are enhanced in group work that also helps pupils to learn from one another. Pupils with learning difficulties contribute effectively during lessons and learn well because skilled support staff provide them with good quality assistance. Arrangements for checking on pupils' rates of progress are satisfactory. However, recent monitoring of

the quality of teaching and inspection evidence confirms that not all teachers are using information about pupils' progress gained from assessments effectively enough. This means tasks do not always challenge and extend the more able pupils, and when this happens they do not make the progress they should. The school is aware of this and is taking steps to improve the situation, but the impact is not yet showing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and has some outstanding elements. In English and mathematics pupils are grouped and taught according to their ability enabling them to make satisfactory progress. In other subjects, learning is planned within a two or three year cycle of activities. This means that the curriculum is effectively organised to ensure that pupils do not repeat their work in mixed aged classes. The curriculum for the youngest pupils is good and provides a secure platform for future learning. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is good. There are clear individual education plans which are monitored closely and set out precisely what pupils need to achieve. Themed events enrich pupils' learning wonderfully. For instance, a Roald Dahl day brought his books to life as the children dressed up as different characters. A broad range of out-of-class activities such as choir, orchestra, computer club and sports sessions attract many pupils and make a strong contribution to their learning and enjoyment. A well planned programme of visits and visitors adds extra enjoyment to pupils' learning. Good provision, in the form of free fruit, free access to water and visits to 'Hazard Alley', ensures that pupils know how to keep healthy and safe. An effective personal, social and health education programme helps pupils to grow in confidence and understand that they have a useful contribution to make to the community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Very secure arrangements for child protection and care for all pupils ensures that all adults are aware of the needs of vulnerable children. Exceptional measures are taken to care for these pupils. For example, pupils with learning difficulties know that 'we get all the help we need'. Regular opportunities are planned for parents and teachers to meet and reports are clearly written and helpful. All pupils have been integrated fully into the life of the school. They are given high quality help in class and their welfare is closely observed. However, a small number of teachers do not set sufficiently ambitious targets for their pupils to achieve. A communication book for teachers and lunchtime supervisors has been very effective in enabling all staff to keep each other informed about the emotional and behavioural needs of individual pupils. The school has very good arrangements to support pupils starting full time education and to ease their transfer to local secondary schools.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher is good because she has provided the school with a clear sense of purpose. The school environment is one in which everyone feels cared for and appreciated. As a result, pupils become confident and responsible young people. Teachers are keen to develop their professional skills. Some have had the opportunity to work with consultants to enhance their practice and this is proving beneficial. The school's new deputy head shares the headteacher's vision and drive to raise standards for all pupils. The effectiveness of the school's systems for checking how well it is doing and what it needs to do to improve are satisfactory. Staff work together to implement changes, but some subject coordinators are not yet fully effective. They are determined to improve their skills and raise standards further through training and professional development. The views of all members of the school community are welcomed. All are becoming aware of the need to raise standards further and are working hard to provide pupils with the best opportunities. Governors make good use of their professional expertise to hold the school to account and fulfil their responsibilities in a very effective way. Their working knowledge of the school stems from their own very honest programme of self evaluation and careful monitoring of the school. Financial management is effective. Governors are prudent in their spending. They find ways of raising additional funds and also use their expertise to enhance resources and provision for the pupils. There is a rolling programme of building and refurbishment and plans to install interactive whiteboards in all classrooms.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you all for being so kind, polite and helpful on our recent visit.

Your school does some things really well. We think that your behaviour is excellent and we know how much you enjoy your lessons. You are all extremely good at attending school regularly and you are very friendly towards each other and your teachers. All adults in the school are good at helping you to be safe and healthy and take good care of you. You have good, interesting things to do.

This is what we have asked the school to do: * set each of you clear targets so that you know what you need to do to do well * make sure that your work in lessons is challenging enough to make each of you think hard and learn new things * help teachers who are in charge of a subject to understand how well you are doing and how you might do even better; this will help everyone to understand what the school does well and what it needs to do to get even better. We are sorry that we missed your Harvest Festival but we are sure that everyone will have enjoyed it.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Barbara Atcheson, Lead Inspector