



The Oldershaw School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105104
Local Authority Wirral
Inspection number 287126
Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Beverley Barlow HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Valkyrie Road
School category	Community		Wallasey
Age range of pupils	11–18		Merseyside CH45 4RJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 6382800
Number on roll (school)	849	Fax number	0151 6911581
Number on roll (6th form)	144		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr I Cubbin
		Headteacher	Mr S Peach
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	18–19 October 2006	287126

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The Oldershaw School is a mixed comprehensive for 11 to 18 year olds located in Wallasey. There is a higher proportion of boys than girls attending the school and very few pupils of minority ethnic heritage. Most pupils come from the immediate locality which includes many relatively disadvantaged areas. The number of pupils receiving free school meals is well above average. Many pupils start the school with literacy and numeracy skills that are well below average. The percentage of pupils joining the school after age 11 is also higher than the national figure. Overall the proportion of pupils with additional learning needs is higher than average. In the last two years the school has had a large number of new teachers and managers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Oldershaw School has recently improved; overall it is satisfactory with many good features. The strong, good leadership and vision of the headteacher and senior leaders is supported by staff at all levels. The school has undergone considerable change that is quite rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This is having a recognisable impact on improving achievement and standards which have risen but remain below average.

In 2006 pupils' progress improved significantly; it was good for pupils aged 14 and satisfactory for those aged 16. Overall, girls do not achieve as well as boys and pupils do not do as well as expected in science. GCSE pass rates have improved consistently over the last three years.

Teaching and learning are good. The school makes good use of data about pupils' ability and prior attainment to set targets and monitor their progress. The new systems to track pupils' performance are effective in enabling early intervention for those who are underachieving. Parents are kept very well informed about pupils' progress and their achievements are celebrated. Inspectors found inconsistencies in the setting and marking of work and as a result pupils are not always clear about exactly what they need to do to improve.

The school is an inclusive and caring community. Pupils who visit the Learning Centre benefit particularly from the academic support given. Personal development is good; most pupils behave well, have a positive attitude to school and contribute to school life which they enjoy. Despite the best efforts of the school, attendance remains lower than the national average. The curriculum has been developed to better meet the needs of all pupils. The school's self-evaluation shows a clear understanding of both the school's strengths and the areas where improvement is needed. Governance is good. The improved achievement of pupils clearly demonstrates that the school has good capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school judged provision in the sixth form as good; inspectors found it to be satisfactory. The number of students in the sixth form has increased in recent years and the curriculum is developing to better meet their needs. The sixth form students can choose to study from 20 advanced level courses, a good range of vocational intermediate level courses and a foundation course. The school is part of the Wallasey consortium of schools which offers students access to a wider range of subjects in other schools but this has not yet been extended to advanced level provision.

Pass rates at AS and A level are below the national average but results for vocational courses are generally good. Retention rates have improved and are now good. Most students make satisfactory progress in the sixth form as a result of satisfactory teaching and learning. However, a significant minority of students do not achieve the grade

expected of them, based on their performance at GCSE. Students make reasonable progress in lessons, most are challenged appropriately but insufficient challenge for more able students was observed in several lessons. Students are very positive about the support they receive and are encouraged to become independent learners and take an active role in the life of the school. At advanced level students are set performance targets and their progress is monitored well but this system has not been extended to vocational courses. Students are aware of how well they are doing but there are inconsistencies in the guidance given as to how they can improve. Progression to higher education is good. Leadership and management are satisfactory but there are insufficient opportunities to share good practice and to increase the value added to the students' progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in science.
- Improve the progress made by sixth form students in relation to their GCSE results.
- Improve attendance.
- Improve the quality assurance arrangements to address the inconsistencies in the setting and marking of work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Standards have improved in recent years but overall they remain below average. At GCSE there has been steady improvement over the last three years and in 2006 the proportion of pupils attaining five or more passes at grade C or above rose to 40% from 31% in 2005. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE passes at grade G or above has continued to improve and almost all pupils leave the school with a qualification. Given that pupils enter the school at age 11 with standards that are below those found nationally, this represents satisfactory progress. However, girls do not do as well as boys and the school has identified this as an area for improvement.

Overall, achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory.

For pupils at age 14, standards in national tests in English, mathematics and science are below average but improved significantly in 2006. Pupils made good progress in English and mathematics; progress in science was satisfactory. The school's efforts to improve reading skills have had a positive impact on raising standards across all subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress. The school makes good use of its analysis of examination data to identify pockets of underperformance and to implement strategies to raise attainment. Evidence from pupils' current work in lessons and from their books confirms the improvements in their achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and participate well in lessons. The school has worked hard on improving behaviour: most pupils behave well and respond positively to each other, their teachers and other adults in the school. The school is a safe and enjoyable place to learn. Parents are supportive of the school. The number of exclusions has declined and is now low. Despite the best efforts of the school, attendance remains lower than the national average. In the sixth form, attendance is good.

Pupils have a good understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues through assemblies and learning activities in personal, social and health education and religious education. Pupils are successfully encouraged to become more self-reliant and to take an active part in the school and its community. Pupils have a say in the running of their school through the school council and have set up a successful mentoring scheme. They have raised money for charities and local heritage projects. Sixth form students act as valuable role models for younger pupils, for example, in helping them to improve their reading skills.

Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and discuss related issues in, for example, English lessons. Pupils eat well from the range of healthy food available in the school canteen. Participation in physical education and the sports and community leadership awards programmes is good. The school prepares pupils well for future life; all have a period of work experience and a range of well thought out activities supports pupils in raising awareness of their options after school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Inspectors agreed with the school that teaching and learning are good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In most lessons detailed planning, a broad range of relevant activities and the good behaviour of pupils create a very positive atmosphere for learning to take place. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and have good subject knowledge. In most lessons observed pupils made good progress; teachers had high expectations and used a broad range of activities to meet pupils' needs. In some lessons a lack of pace and too much teacher input led to pupils losing attention. In addition, inconsistent setting and marking of homework, particularly at Key Stage 3, means that opportunities to develop and extend learning are missed. In the best lessons teachers challenge pupils, they provide good opportunities for individuals and groups of pupils to contribute their own ideas and encourage them to assess their own and

their fellow pupils' progress. All pupils are set learning targets and their progress is closely monitored.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The 11 to 14 year old pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum which makes good provision for developing literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum matches the needs and aspirations of most pupils and includes a wide variety of vocational courses offered at the school and approved local providers. Most pupils find courses that interest them and suit their needs and aspirations. The reduction in the number of pupils who leave the school without a qualification is a good indication of the impact of this work. Pupils are well aware of future education and career opportunities. The school has received a national award for its innovative and high quality work-related learning programme.

The wide range of extra-curricular activities is a strength of the school. The excellent provision for, and high take up of, sporting activities is reflected in the school's achievement of the Sportsmark award. Pupils were keen to stress the enjoyment they get from their involvement in drama and music and the progress they have made as a result of attending extension classes in all areas of the curriculum. The school has achieved the Artsmark Gold award.

The curriculum in the sixth form meets students' needs and offers good progression opportunities for pupils who do not achieve the GCSE grades required to study A levels.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, support and guidance is good and contributes strongly to pupils' progress, enjoyment and well-being in this very inclusive school. Good links with primary schools ensure smooth transfer to Year 7. The school's learning centre provides outstanding additional support for pupils and helps them to achieve well. Pupils say that 'the staff go out of their way to help here'. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust and meet statutory requirements. The school works effectively with parents and other agencies to ensure that pupils' needs are met, especially those deemed to be vulnerable. Pupils' academic progress is tracked closely. Pupils are confident about what they need to do to reach their academic targets and this is having an impact on their progress, although marking does not always provide sufficiently clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work further. Pupils likely to underachieve are identified and provided with extra support. Pupils receive well planned careers guidance at all stages. In Year 9 the arrangements for pupils to make their Key Stage 4 option choices are comprehensive but do not always involve parents. Good information is provided about post-16 options, including the school sixth form, opportunities at the

local colleges and employment with training. Sixth form students are supported well in their applications to university.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school benefits from good leadership and management. The headteacher, ably assisted by senior colleagues sharing his vision, has raised pupils' achievement and significantly improved their personal development in a safe, caring and inclusive environment. Together they have created a strong, confident middle management team displaying a common sense of purpose. Middle managers are very clear about their roles and responsibilities and have introduced well thought out strategies that have significantly improved the quality of teaching and learning. The school's self-evaluation is good, encompassing parents' and pupils' views, communication with neighbouring schools and advice from the local authority.

Effective departmental self-evaluation ensures that all managers have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Subject leaders and those managing care, guidance and support cooperate closely in matching provision to pupils' abilities and aspirations. Staffing issues, which contributed to the school's performance being below target until 2005, have been addressed. The planning, coordination and evaluation of the curriculum, including the analysis of data, are effective. The monitoring of the effectiveness of new initiatives such as the school's assessment policy does not yet cover all subjects. Financial, staffing and material resources are equitably deployed. The main school provides good value for money, and in the sixth form this is satisfactory.

Governors are committed and well informed and monitor the school's performance effectively. The dedication of staff and governors to pupils' welfare is shared with related organisations and agencies supplementing the school's endeavours. The school's reputation locally has gained in strength. The strong impact of recent changes and developments in the school are indicative of its good capacity to improve.

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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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	2
The behaviour of learners	2	2
The attendance of learners	4	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	2

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming the Ofsted inspection team into your school last week. We enjoyed our visit to your school. We were able to visit lessons, look at your work and talk to a number of you and the staff. We also looked at the questionnaires sent in by your parents who are supportive of the school.

Most of you attend school regularly and we were impressed by your good behaviour in lessons and around school. However, a minority of you do not attend school as often as you should. Your school is a friendly and caring place and you receive good support from your teachers. Most of you enjoy coming to school and participate well in lessons. Teaching is good and you enjoy the lessons where there are plenty of activities for you to participate in, especially when you find these challenging. The school lunch menu now offers good opportunities for you to eat a healthy diet. Many of you benefit from the extra activities offered at lunchtime and after school.

The school's GCSE results are below average but are what we would expect, given how well you do in primary school. In Key Stage 3 you make good progress in mathematics and English but could do better in science. The school's GCSE and A level results have improved but we feel that you could do better. We have asked your teachers to push you a bit further. The school has already introduced extra lessons after school and in the holidays. It is important that you try your best and take advantage of the support the school gives you to improve your examination results. Your progress is regularly assessed and monitored but some subjects do not do this as well as others. We have asked the headteacher to work with staff to ensure that homework is set regularly and that the teachers' marking helps you understand how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve.

Your headteacher is clear about what needs to improve and how this can be achieved. He has worked hard with the staff to raise standards. We are confident that the staff at the school can make your school even better. We are sure that you are willing to put in the hard work, which will help improve your opportunities when you leave school. There is much for you and your teachers to be proud of at The Oldershaw School.