

# Overchurch Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105056
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wirral
<b>Inspection number</b>	324149
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Judith Tolley

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	339
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dr P Elliot
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr G Sumner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 February 2006
<b>School address</b>	Moreton Road Upton Wirral Merseyside CH49 4NS
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 6774150
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a larger than average junior school. Most pupils join the school from the adjacent infant school. Pupils are of predominantly White British heritage. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is low. The proportion entitled to a free school meal is higher than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school has the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Healthy Schools Award, Activemark and the Wirral Schools International Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Overchurch Junior School is a good school with outstanding strengths in the pupils' personal development, its quality of care and its curriculum. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. He has the committed support of his staff in his successful quest to raise standards. At the same time his considerable interpersonal skills maintain and enhance the school's warm and friendly atmosphere. As a result the school provides an enjoyable place for children to learn and for adults to work. The overwhelmingly supportive comments made by parents confirm the school's positive climate for both care and learning.

While there is some variation in attainment on entry, standards at the start of Year 3 are generally a little above average. Good progress results in pupils gaining securely above average standards by the end of Year 6. Their progress in English is outstanding. Pupils' accurate, fluently expressed and very clearly organised extended writing is extremely impressive. Pupils make good progress in mathematics, but in science not enough of the more-able pupils reach their full potential. These pupils do not have enough opportunities to interpret data or to carry out scientific investigations independently.

The attitudes of all pupils to learning and to life in school are extremely positive. They take great pride in their own and each other's achievements, eagerly showing visitors displays of everybody's work. Their spiritual development is outstanding. Pupils' written accounts of the lives of children in war situations reveal a great deal of empathy and sensitivity. The international dimension to the curriculum helps pupils develop a good awareness of other cultures and this and events such as '50 years of Overchurch Junior' involve the wider community and indicate how purposefully the school develops community cohesion. Pupils readily take on responsibility and play an important role in improving their school.

The quality of teaching is good. The pace and challenge of the best lessons are outstanding and evident in all years. A Year 3 pupil explained how much he enjoyed the 'challenge' in lessons. The tracking of pupils' progress is exemplary. The support it triggers benefits pupils of all attainments in equal measure. An imaginative series of topics reflects the creative nature of the curriculum. These topics effectively enhance pupils' standards in basic skills and in other areas of learning such as art and music. There are extremely good systems to care for vulnerable pupils. These include effective contacts with a wide network of outside agencies.

While the headteacher displays inspirational qualities of leadership, there are also very good systems that make sure all leaders share accountability. Curriculum coordinators are developing a more secure range of evaluation skills. The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The governing body works closely with the school, for instance, to enhance pupils' safety, and it holds the school to account appropriately. Effective improvements since the previous inspection in the quality of teaching, monitoring and evaluation, and particularly in the use of assessment information, confirm the school's good capacity for improvement. Pupils' good progress and their excellent personal development show that the school provides good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure science teaching provides effective and frequent opportunities for pupils to interpret data and to investigate independently in order to raise achievement, especially of the more-able pupils.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. By the end of Year 6 they reach above average standards. This is good progress in relation to their starting points in Year 3 which are a little above average. Decisive action has reversed the decline in standards seen in the national tests of 2008. The robust implementation by all teachers of a rigorous progress tracking system has successfully raised expectations. Teachers and pupils alike are now fully aware of how high standards can be. Currently, in English, pupils' progress is outstanding and standards are very high. The proportions reaching the expected levels in mathematics and science are securely above average and above average at Level 5 in mathematics. Too few of the more-able pupils reach the higher Level 5 in science because they do not have enough opportunities to develop sufficient independence in scientific investigation and data interpretation. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from learning activities that are well matched to their needs and consistently strong support from teachers and teaching assistants. As a result, they make the same good progress as their classmates.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

Attendance is above average. Pupils have very good relationships with each other and adults at the school and their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils feel safe and valued as individuals and they show great consideration towards younger pupils. The international dimension to the curriculum helps pupils develop a good awareness of other cultures. They have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and how to stay safe, for example, through the 'Bike it' initiative and their involvement in the school's Travel Plan. They also make extremely good contributions to the school community. For instance, they are 'buddies' to the younger children, play in the orchestra and sing in the choir. They play a full part in decision making in the school and regularly share their views through the school council and informal 'tea parties' with the headteacher. These views are reported on a notice board for all to see. They clearly enjoy their learning and are keen to join in class discussions and to work collaboratively.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teachers make good use of curricular links to ensure activities engage and excite pupils. Pupils in Year 3, for instance, were absorbed by solving the sorts of mathematical problems that the pirates they were studying might well encounter. For example, they worked out how many survivors there were after a skirmish and how to divide the treasure between them. Adding to their excitement, the countdown for 'timed activities' was marked by the sound of cannons. In such lessons, teachers' enthusiasm is infectious. Lessons are usually well planned so that pupils consolidate and build effectively on previous learning. Activities are well matched to pupils' capabilities. Teachers present ideas clearly and use questions effectively to support and extend learning. Pupils are regularly challenged to explain how they have arrived at an answer and required to present their ideas to others. They are confident in doing this because in most subjects they have frequent opportunities to work with others, to explore ideas and to solve

problems. This is not always the case in science lessons. As a result pupils do not get enough opportunity to develop skills such as independently planning an investigation or making sense of their results. Teaching assistants work effectively with pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they are able to participate fully in whole-class activities. Teachers' marking of pupils' work in English is exemplary and gives them excellent guidance about how to improve. However, in other subjects it does not always match up to this. In less effective lessons, the pace sometimes slows and momentum is lost because relatively dull activities, such as copying notes or lengthy exchanges with the teacher, insufficiently motivate pupils.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The exciting and wide ranging curriculum is a major factor in the pupils' great enjoyment of school. The creative aspect of the curriculum is excellent. Very well-planned topics such as 'Pirates' and 'The Caribbean' provide very motivating contexts for pupils to apply and develop successfully their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. The outstanding progress in writing is driven by an extremely challenging writing curriculum followed in all years. Other distinctive features include lessons in French and Spanish and the outstanding provision for both creative and performing arts. The work engendered by the art curriculum is striking. The wide range of extra-curricular activities further enriches pupils' experience. They are popular and include a good variety of visits, including residential trips, as well visitors to the school who share their experiences and knowledge. There is a highly relevant personal, social, health and citizenship education programme that impacts very strongly on the pupils' excellent personal development. Pupils are very well prepared for their next stage in education and for life through enterprise activities, such as managing the healthy tuck shop and by solving problems cooperatively.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The excellent quality of care, guidance and support provided for all pupils is highly valued by parents and pupils alike. Parents say, 'It is a lovely school – lots of nurturing, many after school activities and a creative curriculum.' All staff care for pupils extremely well and use a wide range of agencies to support the varying needs of pupils and to remove barriers to learning. Procedures for safeguarding and to ensure the safe recruitment of staff meet government requirements. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with physical and medical difficulties are very well supported so that they are able to participate fully in activities alongside their classmates. Indeed, the school is recognised locally as a centre for inclusion for its work in this area. The transitions from the infant school and on to high school are handled sensitively and effectively so that pupils feel secure and settle quickly when they move from one school to the next. The learning mentor plays an important role in this. Academic guidance and support are informed by a thorough and rigorous tracking system. Progress is regularly reviewed and underachievement rapidly identified. This triggers appropriate support for individuals, no matter what their ability. Pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve to achieve their targets. They are fully involved in evaluating their own progress.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The leadership and direction of the headteacher is outstanding. He is unswerving in his commitment to raising standards and to involving all staff and pupils in improving the school. Self-evaluation is accurate and, as a result, improvement planning is well focused and based firmly on the close scrutiny of pupils' progress towards their targets. Effective actions taken to raise standards have resulted in significant improvement in a number of areas, notably in writing, in mathematics and in the implementation of a robust and rigorous tracking system, which is now used effectively to monitor the work of the school. The impact of the latter can be seen at every tier of management, right down to the classroom. An imaginative management structure ensures effective collaboration between teachers in year groups and this leads to consistent practice and to high expectations across the school. Middle leaders are rapidly developing their roles in monitoring and evaluation. The recent focus on mathematics and science is proving successful in raising standards in mathematics, but the impact on standards at the higher levels in science is yet to be seen. Governors are well informed and are well placed to act as critical friends. The school works effectively with partner institutions to enhance pupils' experiences. Examples include the Gifted and Talented programme and the links with a local Engineering College which help to develop pupils' design technology and enterprise skills.

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## Annex A

**Inspection judgements**

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

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

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

First of all I would like to thank you all on behalf of the inspectors for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views. We were very impressed by the way you explained the displays of work to us and told us how much you enjoyed what you had been learning. Your behaviour is excellent and we noticed how well older pupils care for younger children.

I am sure you will be interested, but not at all surprised, to know that we think your school is a good one, with some things that are outstanding, notably your own attitudes towards learning and your personal development. The care, guidance and support you receive are excellent and help you do your best. The curriculum too is outstanding: it is exciting and it makes your learning fun. The standards you achieve are above average and you all make good progress. Teaching is good and your lessons are interesting. This helps you to achieve well. The headteacher leads the school exceptionally well and is never satisfied unless you are all doing as well as you possibly can. The school is well led and managed and you all play an important role in improving the school and in making decisions, for example, through sharing your ideas with the headteacher at the tea parties and through the school council.

Teachers have been concentrating on helping you to improve your writing and mathematics recently and this is proving successful. You make outstanding progress in English and your writing is of a very high standard. You are also making good progress in mathematics, but we think that you can do even better in science, particularly those of you who find learning easier than most. We saw how well you worked with each other to solve problems and explore ideas for yourselves in lessons. Therefore, we have asked the school to make sure that in science lessons you have more opportunities to plan your own investigations and to work out the results of these for yourselves.

We wish you every success in the future and hope you continue to enjoy your learning.