

Overley Hall School

Independent Special School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	894/6003
Unique Reference Number	123621
URN for social care	SC02058
Inspection number	332452
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2009
Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik HMI
Social care inspector	Martha Nethaway

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005). The inspection of boarding was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

An inspection of the boarding provision was also carried out. The full report on this provision is not published but may be obtained from Ofsted by telephoning 08456 404040.

This was a light touch educational inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Overley Hall School is an independent, residential special school in Wellington, near Telford. It opened in October 1979 and is privately owned. There are 18 pupils aged nine to 19 years. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and all are referred and funded by a number of local authorities. All have severe and complex learning difficulties and most have autism and very challenging behaviour. The vast majority are White British and most have been at the school for three years or more. One boy is a day pupil and the rest are boarders. A range of other professionals work in school, in particular, a speech and language therapist, an audiologist, a local doctor and mental health workers.

Boarding provision was inspected by a social care inspector at the same time as the school's educational provision. The previous inspection of educational provision was in March 2006 and of boarding in June 2008.

The school aims to 'provide a happy, safe and secure learning environment where each pupil has equality of opportunity to access a curriculum designed to meet individual needs and where every member of the school is treated with respect and valued as an individual'.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education and boarding provision is good. Effective teaching and a good curriculum that is well matched to pupils' needs, enable them to make good or better progress in their basic skills and personal development. The promotion and adoption of healthy lifestyles are outstanding. Behaviour management is excellent and this means pupils' behaviour is exemplary, given their difficulties. Pupils are happy and feel very comfortable in their surroundings. Pupils are very well cared for and staff should be congratulated on the way all pupils present themselves each day. Links with parents are good and they hold the school in high regard. They are fully involved in the decisions made about their child's education and welfare.

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection. The school premises are greatly improved. The pre-fabricated, demountable buildings have been removed and a new teaching block including offices, toilets, a staffroom and classrooms has been built. The educational accommodation and grounds are of high quality and are very well used. The school now submits an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred for each pupil to each local authority. This was not done at the time of the last inspection. All regulatory requirements for education and boarding provision are met.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It is tailored to pupils' capabilities and the requirements of each pupil's statement. The curriculum policy provides an accurate summary of the curriculum experienced by the pupils. Appropriate plans and schemes of work exist for all subjects and they are effectively implemented. The nature of pupils' learning difficulties means that their communication, literacy, numeracy and social skills are severely impaired. Therefore, developing these basic skills is rightly at the heart of the curriculum, along with promoting pupils' independence and helping them successfully manage their behaviour. Pupils up to the age of 14 follow a modified National Curriculum which covers all areas of learning. Older pupils aged 14 to 19 follow an Accreditation for Life and Living programme of study which covers leisure, community, environment, home management and the world of work. Some older pupils also attend accredited courses in sport and recreation, cooking and independent life skills at local colleges. Working in unfamiliar surroundings is boosting the older pupils' confidence and improving their ability to socially interact with a wide range of adults.

All pupils follow a suitable personal, social, health and citizenship programme that appropriately focuses on topics such as making choices, respecting others, relationships and sexual health. Excellent use is made of the extensive grounds to promote learning. For example, pupils sow seeds, tend them and then harvest fruit and vegetables for the kitchen and picnics. Pupils understand that organically grown produce is good for you. Where appropriate, additional therapies such as hydrotherapy and outdoor sensory experiences are provided. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to take part in physical activity through swimming, canoeing, bowling and walking. Such activities are helping pupils keep fit and healthy. Art and craft is a strength. The large, three-dimensional 'Cobweb' art work and tile mosaics created with a sculptor and tile maker are of high quality. Computers are used but opportunities are missed for more widespread use of information and communication technology, particularly to produce visual and sequencing material to support learning.

Very effective communication between welfare and education staff means that work done in school is effectively reinforced in the boarding provision. This ensures that any educational targets are consolidated and extended after school and at weekends. Pupils are regularly taken out to visit the local library, restaurants and supermarkets. Visitors, book weeks and outward bound activity weeks further enrich

pupils' learning and broaden their horizons. Two pupils undertake work experience but the leadership recognises that there is a lack of 'real life' work experience or enterprise activity, particularly for the oldest pupils in school.

Teaching and assessment are good. Pupils make good or better progress in developing their academic skills and in their personal development. Pupils' behaviour has dramatically improved since they were admitted. Good use is made of assessment information to ensure work is set at the right level and is matched to the objectives set in pupils' statements. Relationships between staff and pupils are outstanding. Any challenging behaviour is dealt with promptly and sensitively. Life skills are taught very effectively and this means pupils are encouraged to make choices and look after themselves. Pupils are encouraged to show initiative and be independent. However, there are occasions when staff do things for pupils when they are quite capable of doing things for themselves. Staff regularly use signing and/or visual aids to ensure pupils can communicate effectively. However, there are occasions when staff do not fully utilise these techniques and do not encourage pupils to use signs or pictures to facilitate communication.

Staff accurately assess pupils' attainment using pre-National Curriculum levels (P levels) and very small steps in progress are noted. The school lacks a formal system of measuring the rate of pupils' progress over time. The school does not liaise formally with schools of a similar type to help compare the progress made by Overley pupils with that achieved elsewhere. All statutory reviews are carried out within the appropriate timescales.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are happy and enjoy boarding and school life. They attend school regularly and have little time off sick. Pupils relate very well to each other and respect the adults who work with them. The ethnic diversity of the staff helps pupils gain an appreciation of cultural diversity and they show tolerance and respect to those from different backgrounds. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they know right from wrong. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are rare and when they do occur they are dealt with calmly. As a result, pupils resume their work quickly and there is minimal disruption to learning. Pupils make a good contribution to school life by washing up and cleaning tables after meals. They also grow food for others to eat and raise money for a variety of charities. An important strength is the recycling of a wide range of items to sustain the environment. Pupils understand the importance of this work. This said, opportunities for pupils to make a difference in the local community are limited. During the year, pupils celebrate a variety of festivals, including Divali, Christmas and Chinese New Year. Participating in Indian dance and eating Indian and Chinese foods helps pupils gain an understanding of cultural and religious diversity. Trips to the shops and visits to supermarkets and railways help pupils gain an understanding of the world of work and the kinds of public institutions and services that exist within the community.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Very high staffing levels ensure pupils' welfare needs are fully met. Provision for healthy living is outstanding and pupils are adopting a healthy lifestyle. For example, nutritious healthy meals are provided which pupils and staff thoroughly enjoy. It is therefore, no surprise that the school has achieved a Platinum Healthy Schools award and the kitchen has gained a five-star hygiene award for its high quality cleanliness and food safety standards. Careful attention is given to promoting pupils' personal hygiene and dignity and every effort is made to encourage the pupils to take responsibility for their personal care. The administration of medicines is robust and all medicines are kept in locked cabinets and are administered by two members of staff. The school has a satisfactory policy for child protection and all staff, including the designated person, have received appropriate training to carry out their child protection duties. The admissions and preparation-for-leaving policies for boarding are not comprehensive enough. Fire safety procedures are thorough. Regular fire drills are carried out and the inspection and testing of the fire alarm and emergency lighting are done within agreed timescales. Employment and staff vetting procedures are satisfactory. The single central register has very recently been updated and contains all of the required information. The school has planned well to increase accessibility to its premises, fulfilling its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The residential provision was judged to be good. All National Minimum Standards were met. A full report on this provision is available on application to Ofsted.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- encourage staff to use, at every opportunity, signing and/or visual aids, and computer technology to support pupils' learning and development, particularly where these techniques are specified in pupils' statements
- improve the tracking of pupils' progress and consider liaising with other schools of a similar type to help compare and benchmark the attainment and progress of similar groups of pupils
- consider extending work experience and engaging pupils in enterprise activity, particularly the oldest pupils.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision		✓		
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School details

Name of school	Overley Hall School		
DCSF number	894/6003		
Unique reference number	123621		
Type of school	Special School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	October 1979		
Age range of pupils	9–19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 12	Girls: 6	Total: 18
Number of boarders	Boys: 11	Girls: 6	Total: 17
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 12	Girls: 6	Total: 18
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 10	Girls: 6	Total: 16
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,000 to £65,000		
Annual fees (boarders)	£164,000		
Telephone number	01952 740262		
Fax number	01952 740262		
Email address	info@overleyhall.com		
Headteacher	Ms Gill Flannery		
Proprietor	Mrs Anita Brown		
Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik HMI		
Dates of inspection	17–18 March 2009		