

Over Hall Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111130
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	337625
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Judith Tolley

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Vera Farrow
Headteacher	Mrs Hilary Berry
Date of previous school inspection	2 June 2007
School address	Ludlow Close Winsford Cheshire CW7 1LX
Telephone number	01606 288200
Fax number	01606 861998
Email address	head@overhall.school.cheshire.org.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Thirteen lessons were observed; seven teachers were seen; meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. The inspectors spent the majority of the time looking at lessons, but also looked at the school's analysis of pupils' progress and improvement plans. The inspection team analysed 93 pupils' questionnaires and 52 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress pupils make at both key stages to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging, particularly in mathematics
- the effectiveness of the use of assessment in lesson planning to meet the needs of all pupils, especially middle attaining pupils and girls
- the capacity of leadership and management at all levels to raise standards further.

Information about the school

Over Hall Community School is a smaller than average primary school. Pupils are mainly of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than the national average, as is the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage is much lower than average. There are very few pupils for whom English is an additional language. Over the last 18 months, a significant number of pupils have joined Over Hall from a neighbouring school, as a result of local authority reorganisation. The school has Healthy School, Activemark and Basic Skills Quality awards.

Most children join the school from the adjacent Sun Rise Nursery which was inspected separately.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Over Hall is a satisfactory school. There are several good and some outstanding features. The leadership team, under the very clear direction of the headteacher, have acted very swiftly and successfully to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances, whilst maintaining the calm ethos of the school. Robust assessment procedures have enabled the school to rapidly identify individual needs and provide appropriate support for the significant number of pupils who have joined Over Hall from elsewhere over the last 18 months. Good management, well targeted support and close monitoring of pupils' progress has enabled the vast majority of these pupils to integrate well into existing classes and make the same good progress as their peers, without unduly disrupting the learning of the rest. The school works very hard through its strong links with outside agencies and through its good partnership with parents and carers to remove sometimes significant barriers to pupils' learning and to ensure their well-being. Safeguarding procedures are exemplary.

Most pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning, good relationships with their teachers and enjoy coming to school. However, a significant number of the pupils who have recently joined the school came with negative attitudes towards their learning and some with significant emotional and behavioural difficulties. Good care, guidance and support have had a significant impact upon improving their attitudes towards learning, helping them to settle into their new school and promoting satisfactory relationships with their peers. Attendance rates have increased over the past year and are now broadly average. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously and make a satisfactory contribution to the school and wider community, for example in the school council, through fundraising and as mentors and buddies for younger children. Behaviour is satisfactory and improving as a result of the very well focused support for individuals. A very small minority occasionally push the boundaries too far and disrupt the learning of others.

Children usually enter the school with skills that are generally well below expectations for their age, especially in communication and personal and social skills. They make satisfactory progress overall in the Reception class. During Key Stages 1 and 2, as a result of good teaching, they make good progress overall so that by the end of Year 6 the vast majority attain standards that are broadly in line with the national average in English and above average in science. Standards in mathematics have been lower over the past two years. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their classmates. Assessment is usually used effectively to target appropriate support and intervention but is not always used as effectively as it might be to plan for the full range of abilities in all lessons. The curriculum meets pupils' needs

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adequately. Opportunities for pupils to explore ideas for themselves and to work collaboratively to solve problems enable them to make outstanding progress in science. However, pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to do this and to practise their basic skills, particularly writing, in other areas of the curriculum. Boys perform better than girls, especially in science. In lessons, some girls lack confidence in completing tasks or in participating in whole-class discussions. They rely too heavily on teachers to support them.

All staff work well together to improve teaching and provision in the changed circumstances the school is facing and this is proving successful. As a result, the school is demonstrating a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Governors are very well informed, very supportive, and act effectively as critical friends. The school uses resources effectively and provides satisfactory value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics and English to match those in science by:
 - making sure all lessons are planned to meet the needs of all abilities
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively, participate in problem solving activities and to practise their writing skills across the whole curriculum.
- Improve behaviour further.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

By the end of Year 2, standards are below average in reading, well below average in writing but average in mathematics. There has been a rising trend over the last three years in all subjects. On the other hand, attainment by the end of Year 6 has declined over the last three years. Standards in mathematics in particular went down over the last two years from average to significantly below average. This is because a large number of pupils joined the school during the last 18 months, many of whom had lower starting points. Nevertheless they made good progress during their time at Over Hall. Most pupils new to the school have settled well into their new classes. This is as a result of the well focused support they receive both in lessons and in the small group work which helps them to catch up. The excellent support many receive in overcoming sometimes severe emotional and behavioural difficulties is proving successful in enabling potentially vulnerable pupils to settle better into school life and to begin to develop satisfactory relationships with their peers.

In lessons, boys in particular are usually eager to participate in class discussions and are keen to share their ideas with others. Girls are more reluctant but grow in confidence when they are able to discuss their ideas with a partner beforehand. Pupils make the

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best progress when activities are practical and they are given the opportunity to work together with a partner or small group to explore ideas for themselves. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, for instance, pupils made excellent progress in identifying lines of symmetry because of the practical nature of the activities set and the opportunity to work in pairs to solve problems. When pupils are required to listen to the teacher for lengthy periods, however, they become restless, find it difficult to concentrate and in these circumstances a minority can disrupt the learning of others. They appreciate the support they have from teachers and typically say 'My teachers help me to get better and better'. Most say they enjoy school and that learning is fun.

Older pupils expressed concerns about safety and behaviour in the questionnaire but in discussions with inspectors they said they did feel safe and know who they can go to with problems. They also said that though they are confident that issues, such as rare instances of bullying or poor behaviour, are usually addressed promptly and effectively by the school, they are still concerned about them. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle so that most make healthy eating choices and enjoy regular exercise, for example, through the daily 'Wake up, shake up' sessions and activities such as sports, dance and jogging. Pupils usually display respect for one another and their teachers and most have a good sense of right and wrong. They have a satisfactory understanding of their own culture and the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom as well as an increasing understanding of other cultures, for instance through links with a school in Bangalore. Pupils' basic skills and their ability to work collaboratively with others are developing satisfactorily. As a result, they are adequately prepared for their secondary education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Pupils rapidly understand new ideas because of clear demonstrations and explanations by teachers but opportunities are sometimes missed to enable pupils to demonstrate how they arrived at an answer. Both teachers and teaching assistants use questioning to good effect to support and challenge pupils and activities are well sequenced so that pupils build effectively on previous learning. Information and communication technology is used well to support and extend learning and to engage pupils' interest. Assessment information is used particularly well to provide support tailored specifically to meet the needs of individuals and small groups. Teaching assistants are very skilful in supporting pupils and review their progress towards their targets on a day-to-day basis. Marking is regular and encouraging but does not always give specific advice so that, although pupils know their targets, they are not always sure about how to improve their work.

The curriculum adequately meets pupils' needs and interests. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. The school is working towards a 'creative curriculum' but as yet pupils have limited opportunities to practise basic skills, such as their writing and investigative work, across a range of subjects. Links with high schools enhance pupils' learning, for example in science, and ensure that pupils make a smooth transition to the next stage in their education. Pupils enjoy a good variety of clubs and extra-curricular activities, including dance and sports and these are well attended. Opportunities to take part in the local arts festival and 'mini mayor' competition as well as visits and visitors further enrich their experience.

Clearly targeted support for potentially vulnerable pupils, both inside and outside the classroom, has resulted in significant improvement in their attitudes, behaviour, achievement and relationships so that these are now satisfactory. The support provided is very effective in increasing pupils' self-esteem, nurtures better relationships and helps them to make good progress, whilst working effectively alongside their classmates for the majority of time.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

Self-evaluation and school improvement planning accurately identify priorities for the school. Middle leaders, and indeed all staff, play a full role in these procedures and work effectively as a team to drive improvement in the provision and in teaching through the regular planning meetings and lesson observations. Equal opportunities are promoted satisfactorily. The school takes every opportunity to work in partnership with parents and carers. Ten minutes before school starts each morning, for instance, a large number of parents take advantage of the school's invitation to accompany their children into the classroom and chat with the teacher. This, as well as the school's work with outside agencies, helps parents and teachers to resolve problems promptly and remove any barriers to learning. The school's work with the local community, through regular events, such as the coffee mornings attended by pupils as well as parents, and its strong links with local primary and secondary schools satisfactorily promote community cohesion. Safeguarding procedures are outstanding. Policies and procedures are very clear and strictly adhered to. The school integrates issues about safety into the curriculum so that pupils have a good understanding understand about how to stay safe.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Reception class with skills, knowledge and understanding that are well below those expected for their age. Their language and communication skills and social development are often weaker. Children make satisfactory progress overall in their

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learning. They make good progress in their language and communication skills and their social development because adults take every opportunity to engage children in conversation about their work and their play. Behaviour is satisfactory. Although adults are caring and supportive and manage behaviour well in class, procedures and routines are not established clearly enough so that children are not always sure about what is expected and sometimes behave inappropriately so that their learning is interrupted. Good liaison with the adjacent nursery ensures that children settle quickly and staff work well with parents and carers to help them support their children's learning. High importance is placed on caring for children and they enjoy learning in a safe environment. Assessments and observations inform day-to-day planning and the next steps in learning. Although activities engage children's interest and move their learning on, planning does not always allow children to learn effectively through their own experience or provide sufficient challenge for higher attaining children. Teachers work well together to ensure children make a smooth transition between the Reception class and Year 1.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are very pleased with the work of the school and the impact on their children's learning. They commented positively about the support their children receive. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concern about the effectiveness of the way in which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that on occasions the behaviour of a very small minority was poor but that it was dealt with effectively. A few parents were concerned that the school did not take their concerns and suggestions into account. Inspectors found no evidence to support this. Overall, parents' and carers' views reflect the inspection findings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Over Hall Community School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 189 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	60	18	36	0	0	2	4
The school keeps my child safe	33	66	12	24	3	6	2	4
The school informs me about my child's progress	35	70	12	24	2	4	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	56	19	38	0	0	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	33	66	14	28	3	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	60	17	34	1	2	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	56	22	44	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	27	54	13	26	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	60	14	28	2	4	3	6
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	56	14	28	2	4	6	12
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	56	14	28	4	8	4	8
The school is led and managed effectively	31	62	13	26	3	6	3	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	60	14	28	4	8	2	4

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Over Hall Community School, Winsford, CW7 1LX

On behalf of all the inspectors, I would like to thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. The inspection team really enjoyed reading your comments and talking to you all. They listened very carefully to what you had to say.

Yours is a satisfactory school with some things that are good or outstanding. Teachers and adults in your school look after you very well. You told us that you know that if you have a problem, there is always an adult to talk to. The things they do to make sure you are all safe are excellent. You play an important role in improving your school through, for instance, the school council and through your work as mentors and playground buddies for younger pupils. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and particularly like the range of clubs and other activities on offer. You also told us you were worried about poor behaviour. Behaviour is usually satisfactory but occasionally a few pupils don't understand clearly what is expected and do behave poorly. This sometimes distracts you from your learning so I have asked the school to put this right.

Teaching is good and it is helping some of you to catch up so that you make good progress. Some pupils and girls in particular, only make satisfactory progress. We have asked the school to make sure everyone makes the same good progress. You told us that you particularly enjoy lessons where you have the chance to explore ideas for yourselves and work in teams to solve problems. We have asked the school to give you more opportunities to practise your skills, especially writing, through activities like these. The headteacher and staff are working very hard to make your school better. You can help by continuing to work hard, behaving well and by coming to school regularly. Once again, thank you for answering our questions. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Judith Tolley

Lead inspector

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