

# Overchurch Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105043
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wirral
<b>Inspection number</b>	308750
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Eithne Proffitt

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>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	294
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Andre Baird
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs M Chambers
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 October 2004
<b>School address</b>	Moreton Road Upton Wirral Merseyside CH49 4NS
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 6773335
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 6773335

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Overchurch Infant school is larger than average size. The majority of pupils attend from the immediate residential area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and within the very small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, very few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below average. Special provision is made to welcome pupils with additional medical and physical needs.

The school has gained the Artsmark Gold, Activemark, the National Healthy Schools Award, Eco Status and the International Schools Intermediate 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 Infants is a good school with some outstanding features. This is because it aims high for its pupils, knows itself exceptionally well, and takes exceptional care of its pupils. Pupils place their trust in the adults in school and are developing into mature young people with a real sense of responsibility. The well-being and academic achievement of pupils is never off the headteacher's agenda and, with the support of a strong management system and perceptive governance, the school is successfully being driven forward after a short period of instability at leadership level. Through this time, there was a decline in standards to broadly average and also some pockets of underachievement, especially among the boys. The school is now rapidly recouping features of the outstanding achievement of the recent past and boys are now making notable strides in their learning.

Very close links between school and home and with other settings ensure that children's first days in Nursery or Reception are settled and happy times. These children come to school with skills that are broadly similar to children of their age. They make good progress through the Foundation Stage because of the wide range of learning experiences provided for them. By the end of Reception, children are working securely within the levels expected of them. This is especially so in their personal and social development. Pupils continue to make this good progress across Years 1 and 2. Current standards in Key Stage 1 indicate that standards are rising and are generally above average. Boys are now performing much better but the more able pupils could achieve at a better rate. Evidence from the school's outstanding tracking systems shows clearly that pupils in Years 1 and 2 are currently making good progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. Their confidence and social awareness develops excellently in their time in the school. They play very well together, behave exceptionally well and work hard. They care particularly about each other, their school, their community and the world in which they live. Attendance at school is satisfactory overall. The school is active in working with parents to improve this but some parents still insist on taking family holidays during term time.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some that is outstanding. Teachers ensure that lessons capture pupils' interests and encourage them to be effective learners. In some lessons, however, teachers do not expect enough of the more able pupils and consequently they do not always make the progress of which they are capable.

The curriculum focuses on the development of pupils' skills and is delivered through a wide variety of topics that are specifically planned to interest all pupils. Learning is suitably enhanced through an array of visiting specialists. Pupils' academic guidance is outstanding and, for such young children, they have an unusually clear understanding of their targets and how to achieve them. The drive, determination and direction of the headteacher have assured that all staff are suitably focused and accountable for pupils' progress. This effective school provides good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

When they first come to Overchurch Infants, the majority of children have generally acquired skills at a level expected for children of their age, although an increasing number are experiencing some speech and language difficulties. Induction to both Nursery and Reception is meticulously

planned to ensure that children, from the first moment, feel happy and secure. The teamwork of the Foundation Stage staff is the key to the provision's success. The children experience consistently good and outstanding teaching. Staff are not afraid to 'think outside the box' and take risks to provide exciting and engaging learning experiences. As a result, children have fun and do well in their learning. Planning is collaborative and increasingly focused on children's different needs and interests. Assessment of how children are progressing is firmly rooted in observations and this valuable information informs the next steps for the provision. Staff are creative in how they provide opportunities both indoor and outdoor that will capture and nurture all children, successfully supporting the whole-school target of engaging boys in their learning. When children leave the Foundation Stage, they are working securely within the levels expected for children of their age and are therefore well equipped for their next stage of learning. Comments such as 'My child's confidence has grown and their creativity has been developed,' typify parents' appreciation of the school. The setting is well led and managed with a shared vision of successful early years education.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the level of challenge for the more able pupils in all lessons.
- Work with parents to raise levels of attendance.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Building effectively on the good start children make in the Foundation Stage, pupils achieve well and reach standards that are generally above average by the end of Year 2. In recent year, pupils made very good progress to reach standards by the end of Key Stage 1 that were significantly above national figures. In 2007, as a consequence of the instability in leadership, standards dipped. The biggest impact was felt in pupils' achievement in writing with boys underachieving in all subjects. An immediate, resolute refocus on standards, ensured that the school quickly got back on track. Current standards are above average with boys performing particularly well. Some of the more able pupils, however, do not achieve as well as they can because in some classes expectations are not high enough and these pupils are not provided with sufficiently challenging activities. School tracking procedures are impressive and give clear messages about pupils' progress. The monitoring of individual pupils is very finely tuned and currently shows accelerated progress for the majority of pupils across the school. This better picture of achievement is beginning to have a significant impact on current standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those pupils with additional medical and physical needs are given good support and help. In this inclusive school these pupils thrive and make good progress alongside their peers.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being is at the core of the school's work and contributes overwhelmingly to pupils' confidence and achievement. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is also outstanding. The school's award of Eco Status confirms its commitment to eco issues to the whole school and the wider community. Pupils express their spiritual development in a number of ways, for example in the assembly led by representatives from the church spirituality was tangible in pupils' singing and the awe in which they listened to and reflected on the story of Moses and Miriam. The pupils' acceptance of the differences

that exist among people around them and across the wider world supports their cultural development extremely well and lays the foundations for life in our culturally diverse society. 'The standards of cultural awareness are impressive,' is a reflection of the large number of positive parental views. From an early age, pupils are aware of healthy lifestyle choices and how to stay safe, including knowing some of the dangers of internet use. They willingly take on responsibilities, for example through the school council, the members of which speak with pride about their fundraising for the needy in other parts of the world. The Planet Patrollers also appreciate the important role they have in school - their distinctive hats add to their feeling of belonging to this important group! In lessons, even the very youngest pupils are beginning to show skills of perseverance, persistence and collaboration, preparing them well for their future.

Attendance at school is satisfactory overall. However, detailed school analysis shows significant numbers of pupils whose attendance is above and well above average. This analysis also highlights the large number of parents who insist on taking family holidays during term time. The school works hard to remind parents of the need to take holidays out of term time.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning is good overall with some that is outstanding. All teachers have a strong commitment to capturing pupils' interests, encouraging eager learners and personalised learning. In outstanding lessons, teachers capitalise fully on all pupils' potential, leading to rapid progress. Crystal clear explanations, quick-fire pace, active learning, well targeted and challenging questioning and a strong inclusive ethos prompt pupils to think hard and stretch themselves to achieve the objectives set for them. For example, in one lesson the teacher was able to build on an educational visit to Dunham Massey Hall and pupils acted as detectives to 'sift' evidence on how holidays have changed over a hundred years. Pupils were engrossed in old photographs and demonstrated teamwork and collaboration, with the more able pupils meeting their own challenging objectives and also supporting other pupils to achieve theirs. In some lessons, however, insufficiently high expectations of the more able pupils means that they do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Teaching assistants play an active role in lessons, providing high quality, well planned support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This contributes well to the good progress they make. Outstanding use is made of assessment on a day-to-day basis and also to check on the pupils' progress towards their targets. School leaders are working hard to ensure that all teaching is of the highest standard possible with some teachers training to be 'coaches' to share the best teaching and learning provision across the school.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils really enjoy topics that cross subject boundaries and the Artsmark Gold, Activemark, eco and Healthy Schools awards and Intermediate International School status all add to the breadth of high quality experiences that pupils receive. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used to develop key skills. It is effectively integrated into lessons. Investigative and problem-solving techniques and the inclusion of speaking and listening activities also feature strongly, preparing pupils well for future phases in their school life. In some lessons however,

activities are not always planned to sufficiently challenge the more able pupils. Writing is very well promoted through the 'Big Write' and through collaboration with creative partnerships. While a single modern foreign language is not yet a strong feature of school life, pupils are introduced to a variety of languages through, for example, registration in French and Maori. Visiting artists, Junior Chef Week, arts weeks, extra-curricular activities at lunchtime and after school and a wealth of multicultural activities, alongside targeted activities to improve boys' writing, have all helped to raise standards across the school.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

This is a truly inclusive school where the pastoral care and support for all pupils, including those with severe medical and physical needs, is outstanding. All statutory requirements and procedures for safeguarding and protecting pupils are in place and robustly applied. All staff know individual pupils very well and work very hard to ensure that pupils feel safe and happy in school. 'It's great here, I love it!' typifies the view of many pupils. This very effective pastoral support ensures that all pupils, and especially the most vulnerable, have someone with whom they can share any worries or go to when they need time to reflect. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported through individual education plans that set out clearly how their needs should be met. Procedures for checking pupils' progress are outstanding from the moment children start at the school and underpin the pupils' outstanding personal development and good academic achievement. Academic guidance is outstanding. Very detailed, regular checks ensure that no child slips through the net. Teachers make exceptional use of this information and their knowledge of pupils to set individual targets to guide their future learning. Even the youngest of children know these targets very well and are clear about what they need to do to achieve them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Since her return from secondment, the tenacious leadership of the headteacher has been responsible for a thorough review of expectation and rigour in teaching and learning. The recent decline in standards was viewed as unacceptable. With renewed vigour and with the full support of the leadership team and staff, a culture of accountability has been re-established. This now permeates the school and is the driving force for improvement. Structures for providing leadership and management at different levels have been clarified and middle managers play a full and active role in helping to raise standards and achievement in all subjects. The impressive systems and detailed information gathered on pupils' progress, alongside assessment data from class teachers, assure corporate responsibility for standards and achievement. School self-evaluation is accurately fed by a wide range of internal and external contributions. Governors play a major part in the work of the school, providing a good level of both challenge and dedicated support. Governors, led by a dynamic chair, are firmly focused on the key priority to raise standards and achievement even further. Given pupils' good progress, the headteacher's purposeful leadership, her powerful vision for the future of the school, and the governors and staff's high expectations of what pupils can achieve, the school has the commitment and good capacity to improve further.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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 disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	1

### The quality of provision

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

<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.

## Annex A

**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	1
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 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
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

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Overchurch Infant School, Wirral, CH49 4NS

Thank you very much for welcoming us in such a friendly manner to your school. We enjoyed our visit very much and agree with you that Overchurch Infants is a good school. We thought many of the things about your school were good and we would love to share with you those that particularly pleased us.

- You are really enthusiastic about learning and you work hard.
- You are helpful and very considerate of other people's needs.
- You make good progress and many of you achieve well by the end of Year 2.
- Your teachers organise your learning in exciting ways that also make it fun. They also use ICT very well and so do you!
- Staff take good care of you and, through your targets, help you to understand clearly how to make your work even better.
- Your headteacher is extremely good at working out what improvements are needed and helping all the staff to put them into practice.

This is what we have asked the school to do next to make it even better.

- Make sure that all your teachers ensure that those of you who find your work easy are always challenged to do your best in all lessons.
- Work with your parents to make sure that they bring you to school every day.

You can help your school too by continuing to enjoy finding out about and doing new things and by working really hard.