

Overstone Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121849
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314120
Inspection date	4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

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 on roll	
School	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Betty White
Headteacher	Mark Currell
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2003
School address	Sywell Road Overstone Northampton NN6 0AG
Telephone number	01604 493861
Fax number	01604 492464

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is much smaller than average and almost all pupils are White British. Although the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average, the proportion of those with a statement of educational need is well above average.

The school has achieved Active Mark status and the Arts Mark silver award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This school provides a good education for its pupils. Parents are very supportive, and this comment by one parent reflects the views of many: 'Overstone Primary is a great school. It is not just a place for learning and playing, but is an extension of the family.' The headteacher provides a strong lead in ensuring that the school community is a very happy and friendly place in which pupils feel safe and secure. Staff know and value each pupil as an individual and consequently, provide good pastoral care, guidance and support.

Children have a good start to their school life in the Reception class. Very good induction procedures ensure they settle quickly and develop positive attitudes towards learning. These positive attitudes continue and classrooms are busy places where pupils try very hard to do their best. Pupils want to be in school and attendance is above average. Behaviour is excellent and pupils very willingly work together to share ideas. They greatly enjoy helping each other and are proud of the work of the school council, which does a worthwhile job raising money for people less fortunate than themselves.

A key contributory factor to pupils' excellent enjoyment is the interesting curriculum, which is enriched well by many visits, visitors and an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. The outstanding links with outside agencies, including local schools, also successfully promote pupils' enjoyment and their personal well-being. The strong emphasis on leading a healthy lifestyle means that pupils have an exceptionally good understanding of the need to eat sensibly and take regular exercise. They know that smoking and taking drugs can damage their health.

Good quality teaching also effectively aids enjoyment and ensures that pupils' achievement is good. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, they have made good progress and standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. The systems for tracking individual pupils' progress are not rigorous enough to enable school leaders to check that pupils are making sufficient progress each year. Teachers are competent in ensuring pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn. However, they do not provide sufficient advice about how they can succeed in their learning. There are missed opportunities for pupils to assess for themselves how well they are doing and how they can improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are included well in all activities, because of the good support they receive from teaching assistants.

School leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in provision and have correctly identified that pupils' writing skills are in need of improvement. Although this is an identified priority, pupils have too few opportunities to practise and improve these skills in subjects other than English. Also, in Years 1 and 2, pupils too often record their ideas on worksheets. This limits the development of their independent writing skills. However, pupils' good social and academic skills prepare them well for the next stage of education.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter Reception with skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. Good teaching results in good progress, by the time they enter Year 1, the majority of them are working securely within the goals expected for their age, with some exceeding these goals. Children's personal, social and emotional development is particularly good. They settle quickly into school, are happy and enjoy their work. This is because relationships are very good and

adults plan interesting and fun activities for them. However, there are times when children become restless as a result of sitting and listening for too long a period of time. The use of the newly established outdoor area is developing well, as staff explore ways of using this environment to improve children's learning. Parents are pleased with provision, and as one parent typically commented, 'As a parent I know I can always have peace of mind knowing my child is well cared for'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maximise the opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their writing skills.
- Develop a rigorous tracking system that enables the leadership to check efficiently that pupils are making the progress expected of them year by year.
- Involve pupils more in knowing how to improve the quality of their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. By Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science, although this can vary with such small cohorts. The school has worked hard to raise standards in science, a key issue of the previous inspection. This has resulted in an above average proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 over the last two years. However, although school leaders have identified that writing is a weaker aspect of pupils' learning, there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their writing skills in subjects such as history, geography and religious education. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their classmates because their needs are identified quickly and effective support is provided.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils greatly enjoy school and feel valued. As one pupil said, 'Learning is fun, our teachers are kind and our school is like one big happy family'. Behaviour is excellent, and pupils confidently say the very few instances of bullying are dealt with effectively and fairly. They have an excellent understanding of leading a healthy lifestyle with many taking part in the extensive range of extra-curricular sporting activities that are available.

Pupils are respectful and have a good understanding of different beliefs. Care and consideration towards others is a very strong feature. Pupils are keen to volunteer for jobs and are proud to be school council members. The council meets regularly, raising money for a variety of different charities such as Macmillan nurses and children with leukemia. They particularly enjoy hosting coffee mornings for the local community to attend. Although pupils are keen to accept responsibility, they are not sufficiently involved in evaluating how well they are doing in their work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and expect them to work hard. Pupils respond to this very well and their behaviour is exemplary, allowing them to learn at a good rate. All teachers are good at sharing with pupils what they are expected to learn in the lesson. However,

pupils are provided with insufficient information about how to achieve this learning. For example, when asked, how do you know if you have written a good story, one pupil replied, 'My teacher will tell me!'

Resources such as interactive whiteboards are used effectively to show new learning and to motivate pupils. Teaching assistants are deployed carefully to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ensuring they are included in all lessons. Very good relationships mean that pupils are confident to answer questions knowing their answers will be respected by adults.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The extensive range of extra-curricular activities, visits to places of interest and visitors to school, successfully enrich the pupils' experiences. These, and the school's very good links with external agencies and other schools, contribute effectively to pupils' well-being and to their understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. The strong emphasis on creativity, alongside the good acquisition of basic skills of literacy and numeracy, encourages pupils to speak enthusiastically about their art and drama activities. Information and communication technology is used well to support learning and to stimulate pupils' interest. However, not enough attention is given to activities that will develop pupils' writing skills. In Years 1 and 2, the overuse of worksheets inhibits pupils' independent recording skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are pleased with the attention their children receive, and are right in their view that the school takes good care of their children. All policies and procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and well-being are well established. Pupils are known as individuals and the welfare of each is taken very seriously. Relationships are very good and pupils are very confident that adults will listen to them if they need help. Good support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This underpins their good progress.

A satisfactory system is in place to track and record pupils' progress and to provide teachers with information about the levels pupils are working at. However, this system does not enable the leadership to check efficiently if pupils make sufficient progress year by year. Pupils do not clearly understand how to improve the quality of their work and their self-assessment skills are underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has been successful in establishing an ethos where staff work effectively together and are mutually supportive. Governors visit the school regularly and consequently are knowledgeable about provision. Self-evaluation is accurate and there is a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses. The school improvement plan identifies the correct priorities, for example improving pupils' writing skills. However, the leadership acknowledges that there has been insufficient checking that pupils have sufficient time and opportunity to practise and improve their skills. Even so, the school has worked hard to successfully rectify the key issue

of the previous inspection and this, alongside improvements made in the environment, particularly for Reception children, shows that the school has 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?	1
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 ¹ 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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well 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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

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?	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 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

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

- Thank you for making us so welcome at your school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing about your work. This letter is to tell you about our findings.
- We agree with you and your parents that your school is a good one, and you are like one big happy family.
- It is good to know you feel safe in school and adults take good care of you.
- Those of you who are in the Reception class get off to a good start because the adults plan lots of fun things for you to do.
- Your classrooms are very busy places, where it is good to see you all working hard and trying to do your best. It is clear you enjoy school very much!
- Your behaviour is excellent, and you should be very proud of the way you try to help each other and people who are less fortunate than you are.
- We think you have an interesting curriculum which is made so much more exciting by the many visits, visitors and extra clubs that you attend. Some of your art work is amazing and makes the school environment very attractive.
- You know all about eating healthily and taking lots of exercise to keep yourself fit. It is good that you know the dangers of smoking and taking drugs.
- You make good progress and, by Year 6, you attain standards that are higher than those usually found in primary schools. This is because your teachers make lessons fun for you and make sure you are clear about what you are learning.
- We think your headteacher and staff work together well and know what is needed to make your school even better. We have suggested some things which we think will help:
 - We have asked that you are all given the chance to practise your writing skills in lots of different subjects, such as history, geography and religious education.
 - We think the school needs better systems for checking that you all make the progress in your learning that you should every year.
 - We have asked your teachers to give you more guidance about how you can improve your work.

Thank you again for being so polite and helpful. If you remember, try to ask your teachers for advice about what you can do, to help you attain even higher standards!

5 October 2007



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Overstone Primary School, Northampton, NN6 0AG

Thank you for making us so welcome at your school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing about your work. This letter is to tell you about our findings.

- We agree with you and your parents that your school is a good one, and you are like one big happy family.
- It is good to know you feel safe in school and adults take good care of you.
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- You know all about eating healthily and taking lots of exercise to keep yourself fit. It is good that you know the dangers of smoking and taking drugs.
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Thank you again for being so polite and helpful. If you remember, try to ask your teachers for advice about what you can do, to help you attain even higher standards!

Yours faithfully
Lois Furness
Lead inspector