

Overstone Park School

Overstone Park, Overstone, Northampton, NN6 0DT

Inspection dates 17–19 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management	Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Inadequate	4
Sixth form provision	Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings

This is an inadequate school because

- Leaders and managers do not ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met. Consequently, the regulations relating to leadership and management are not met.
- The proprietors do not carry out and record all of the checks currently required to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children.
- Pupils' safety is inadequate because of the poor implementation of safeguarding procedures.
- The sixth form is inadequate because the safeguarding regulations are not met.
- The early years setting is inadequate because the safeguarding regulations are not met.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' achievement throughout the school is good. This can be seen in the results of national examinations at age 16.
- Teaching is good; all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and the most able, make good progress.
- Pupils' good behaviour and their conduct around the school shows strong mutual respect and tolerance of diversity.
- The school has a strong sense of community. Staff have a good knowledge of their pupils and are able to give them effective support.
- The school's support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is strong. They display a good knowledge of British society and a high level of respect for other cultures.
- Pupils benefit from a good curriculum that is well-matched to their needs. As a result, almost all pupils are successful in gaining entry to their choice of further education.
- The early years setting makes good provision for the needs of children, and their outcomes are good.
- The sixth form provision is well-matched to the needs of individual students, and their achievements and personal development are good.
- Parents are highly satisfied with the education provided for pupils by the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with a day's notice.
- Six lessons and a school assembly were observed, a scrutiny was made of pupils' written work and inspectors heard a group of children read.
- Meetings were held with the proprietors, the head teacher, senior staff and groups of teachers.
- The views of parents were gathered from 13 responses to the on-line Parent View survey and meetings at the start of the school day. A high proportion of staff also completed a questionnaire.
- Meetings were held with representative pupils, and inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection in order to ascertain their views.
- A wide range of documentary evidence, including the policies for welfare, health and safety, records of behaviour management and recruitment records was evaluated. Information on pupils' achievement and evidence of the monitoring of teaching were also reviewed. Before the inspection, the inspectors checked the school's arrangements for meeting the safeguarding standards, as identified on its website.

Inspection team

Richard Johnson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Nina Bee

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Overstone Park School was founded in 1983 by the current proprietors. It is a day school for pupils between the ages of two and 18 years, although almost all pupils leave at the age of 16. There is one student in the sixth form.
- It is owned by joint proprietors, one of whom is the head of the school and undertakes the day-to-day leadership and organisation.
- The school aims to 'realise the gifts and talents of all pupils. They are encouraged to be caring and helpful members of the community showing good manners and respect towards others'.
- The school is set in a five acre site in a rural location to the east of Northampton. Its facilities include a multi-purpose hall, specialist teaching areas for computing, art and science and an area for animal husbandry.
- There are 41 children in the early years setting, 29 of whom attend on a part-time basis. Twenty-six of these receive government funding for three and four-year-olds. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is higher with that found nationally; a significant proportion of these pupils move to the school for their secondary education.
- Pupils come from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds that reflect those of the local area. None speaks English as an additional language.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provider.
- The school was last inspected in November 2010, when its quality of education was judged to be good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the safeguarding arrangements for pupils through the implementation of rigorous procedures that meet the regulatory requirements for independent schools and the statutory requirements for the early years by:
 - conducting all the necessary checks to ensure the suitability of staff and recording the outcomes of these appropriately
 - implementing a safeguarding policy that reflects current guidance in keeping pupils safe
 - ensuring that the proprietors conduct a thorough annual review of safeguarding procedures.
- Strengthen the procedures for the oversight of health and safety, in particular the identification of potential hazards, to achieve a uniformly high standard.
- Improve the quality of teaching across the school to outstanding by ensuring that teachers:
 - make better use of assessment information to plan work which matches pupils' different levels of ability
 - use questioning in lessons to challenge pupils' thinking in order to assess their depth of understanding.
- Refine the use of information now being collected on each pupil's progress to enable the school to gain a more complete picture of the progress made by different groups of pupils, as well as that made by individuals.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietors must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraphs 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).
- The proprietors must record the relevant checks to ensure the suitability of staff at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 21, 21(3) (a) (ii)

and iii).

- The proprietors must ensure the particulars of the arrangements for meeting the standard contained in paragraph 7 are published on the school's internet website (paragraphs 32(1) and 32(1)(c)).
- The proprietors must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the Independent School Standards are met consistently; fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the Independent School Standards are met consistently; and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).

The school must meet the statutory requirements for the early years

- Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children. These should be in line with the guidance and procedures of the relevant Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) (paragraph 3.4).
- Providers must ensure that effective systems are in place to record the checks made to ensure the suitability of staff (paragraph 3.12).

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leadership of the school is inadequate because safeguarding procedures do not meet the current standards. In addition, the required checks to ensure the suitability of staff are not carried out and recorded correctly. Consequently, the regulations for leadership and management are not met.
- The safeguarding policy on the school's website was found to be out of date and did not reflect current government guidance. The school, therefore, does not meet the requirement to publish such information on its website.
- The school development plan is based on an effective self-evaluation of the school's strengths, and clearly identifies areas for educational development. Current priorities include further changes to the curriculum in order to meet the needs of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, and providing training for staff in order to deliver these changes effectively. Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for the school, and are highly committed to ensuring its future success.
- The recommended areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been met. Teachers use effective strategies to encourage pupils to develop good independent learning skills, and curriculum planning documentation now indicates how the needs of all groups of pupils are met. Revised assessment procedures are in place to track the progress of individual pupils. However, leaders do not always use assessment information to monitor the progress of groups of pupils. Consequently, they do not have a sufficiently clear overview of progress across subjects and year groups in order to ensure that achievement is consistently good, or better.
- Methods to manage the quality of teaching are good. There are opportunities for teachers to share good practice. There is a rigorous performance management system, which includes formal observations and a work scrutiny. Clear targets for areas of improvement are agreed, and suitable training opportunities are provided. Discussions with leaders indicated a good understanding of how to improve teaching further in the future.
- The role of middle managers has strengthened; subject leaders have a greater involvement in the development of their subject and the examination courses provided.
- A good curriculum is provided for pupils of all ages and the current range of subjects is wide and balanced. It has recently been revised in response to the new National Curriculum. The school is in the process of introducing additional subject options for older pupils in order to increase their choice, and these are linked well to possible career options. For example, new BTEC courses are now provided in child care and animal husbandry. Citizenship lessons prepare the pupils well for their life in modern British society, including their financial and emotional well-being and they understand healthy lifestyle choices.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is strong. Leaders have successfully created an inclusive and caring ethos within the community. Pupils show a sense of spirituality in assemblies, and have a clear sense of right and wrong. They have good social skills, and the school is successful in actively promoting a good knowledge of British institutions and values through activities such as the school parliament and debates in citizenship lessons. They show a respect and understanding for the rule of law and democratic values, and a tolerance of diversity. Pupils study many other religions and cultures, and in discussions they showed a strong awareness and respect for these.
- Good quality careers information and guidance is provided for secondary aged pupils and it is particularly strong in Years 10 and 11. All pupils have identified post-16 destinations that are suited to their individual aspirations. The school is notably successful in organising work experience placements to match these.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well. The attention given to the personal development and well-being of all pupils is effective. This can be seen in the rapid improvements in the progress of some pupils who enter the school with previously poor attendance, punctuality or attitudes.

- The views of parents about the leadership of the school are highly positive. In response to the online survey and in meetings, a very large majority of parents are satisfied with the leadership and management, and would recommend the school to another parent.
- The governance of the school:
 - The governance of the school is inadequate. Not enough attention has been given to safeguarding pupils' welfare. There is no governing body and governance is undertaken by proprietors.
 - The proprietors have not carried out the required annual review of safeguarding procedures effectively, including their oversight of necessary recruitment checks. As a result, the regulatory requirements are not met. In addition, they have not ensured there is sufficient rigour to the health and safety arrangements.
 - Due to their additional roles in the school, including its leadership, the proprietors are closely involved in the daily life of the school, and have a good knowledge of the staff and insight into the quality of education provided. They are well-known to pupils and their families.
 - They provide prudent financial management, and have ensured the school has adequate staffing and resources in order to deliver its education programmes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are inadequate

Behaviour

- The behaviour of the pupils is good, and this results in a calm and orderly atmosphere around the site. Pupils are polite and friendly, and show respect towards each other and adults. They wear their uniform smartly, and have a strong sense of a pride in their school.
- Behaviour in lessons is good. Pupils respond promptly to instructions, and apply themselves well to set tasks. However, on rare occasions, their response is passive as they are reluctant to participate in activities or respond to questions they are asked. There are a few instances of low level disruption.
- The strategies used to promote good behaviour are effective. Pupils value the rewards they are given, and report that sanctions are used fairly, and adapted accordingly in the case of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs. They also report that bullying is rare, and it is promptly and effectively addressed when it does take place. They feel that teachers know them well as individuals, and provide good support for them.
- Levels of attendance are high, and the school has robust procedures to follow up absences.
- The views of parents about behaviour are highly positive; the parents of several pupils that had recently joined the school spoke highly of a noticeable improvement in their children's attitudes and behaviour.
- The school is notably successful in promoting self-esteem amongst its pupils and an acceptance of diversity within the community. There is no evidence of prejudice in their views or behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is inadequate. The safeguarding arrangements do not meet regulatory requirements; the safeguarding policy required strengthening in key areas, indicating that the review of safeguarding procedures is not carried out effectively by the proprietors. The procedures to ensure the suitability of staff, and the way in which these checks are recorded in the single central record of staff appointments, also fall short of current requirements.
- The school responded positively to these findings, and drafted a new policy. The single central record was amended to include the required information, and leaders showed a good awareness of how these procedures could be strengthened in the future.
- A scrutiny of maintenance records indicates the school has efficient systems in place to ensure the safety

of plant machinery and other equipment. Risk assessments are produced to cover the full range of activities both on and off site. Fire safety procedures are good; all equipment is regularly tested and evacuation drills take place twice each term. The school site is secure, and there are suitable procedures to check and manage the movements of visitors.

- Pupils show a strong awareness of how to stay safe online. The school has good procedures to educate pupils about the potential dangers from fire and road traffic, as well as water safety.
- Medical provision is good and there is suitable accommodation for pupils that are injured and unwell. Staff have appropriate first aid training, and secure procedures are in place to administer medications.
- Supervision levels are suitable for the age and numbers of pupils. Pupils report that they feel safe, and this view is supported by almost all parents.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good and contributes to the good levels of attainment and progress throughout the school. Most lessons are well planned and show an awareness of the needs of all learners. Teachers use assessment information effectively to monitor the progress made by individual pupils, and successfully engage pupils in their learning.
- The needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and the most able, are generally met through appropriate activities. Occasionally, teacher's planning does not take sufficient account of the prior attainment of pupils, and the tasks provided are too similar, meaning that some pupils either find the work either too easy or too difficult.
- In addition to regular formal assessments, teachers use a variety of methods to establish the progress made by individual pupils. Good examples were observed of probing questioning, that explore the depth of pupils' knowledge and their understanding of the wider concepts. However, the quality of questioning is not consistent, and in a small number of lessons these opportunities were missed.
- Teachers help to promote good levels of numeracy and literacy across all subjects. They provide opportunities for extended writing and applied mathematical tasks in lessons such as history and science, and usually indicate errors in spelling and grammar. However, evidence from the book scrutiny indicates that teacher's expectations of presentation and handwriting are too variable.
- The standard of marking is good. All teachers follow the school's policy; books are marked regularly, and comments usually indicate how pupils can improve their work. In interviews, pupils were very positive about the feedback they receive, and feel that this helps them to learn and make good progress. This was supported by evidence seen in books.
- Teachers make good provision to ensure that pupils develop effective independent learning skills, in line with the recommendation of the previous inspection. Pupils know what to do if they become stuck. Good examples were seen of projects and research activities in subjects such as science. Teacher's planning makes good links between subjects such as history, geography and religious studies, increasing the opportunities for pupils to apply their previous knowledge.
- Teachers actively promote a good understanding of British society, its values and its institutions, and present these topics in a non-partisan manner, so that pupils are aware of the need to respect the views of others and are tolerant of diversity. They also provide good opportunities to study and understand other cultures and faiths in assemblies, religious studies and citizenship lessons.
- Staff have a good subject knowledge, and show an enthusiasm for their subject that helps to motivate their pupils. They generally have high expectations of effort they require from pupils. Occasionally, a small amount of inappropriate behaviour in lessons is not always challenged and addressed sufficiently.

- Resources are used effectively to support teaching. Pupils indicate homework is set regularly, and is usually clearly linked to their on-going learning. Teachers make good use of a wide range of educational visits to enhance their teaching, and pupils indicated that these help to motivate them and increase their knowledge of the relevant topics.
- Parents indicated that they are very satisfied with the quality of teaching.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The achievement of the pupils is good throughout the school. Pupils demonstrate good levels of literacy and numeracy, and they can apply these skills effectively across other subjects.
- The proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was in line with the national average in 2014 and well above this in 2012 and 2013. This is supported by evidence from the school's own grading system, which indicates that almost all pupils are achieving at least in line with their ability, with a significant proportion exceeding expectations.
- Outcomes for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those with statements or educational, health and care plans, are good. Their outcomes in English and mathematics GCSE are good, and they have also gained good results in other subjects, most notably in their BTEC results in science.
- The most-able pupils also make good progress. This can be seen in their success in gaining admission to selective courses and apprenticeships. In their written work and during lessons they successfully undertake challenging extension tasks when given the opportunity, and some detailed and clearly-presented examples of research projects were seen.
- All pupils leaving at age 16 have been successful in gaining admission to their first choice of further education establishment or training course. Those interviewed indicated that they feel the school has prepared them well for their subsequent education, through the courses provided, the development of good learning skills and the arrangement of well-matched work placements.
- The school does not use standardised measures of attainment and progress. However, evidence from the work scrutiny, lesson observations and a review of the school's own assessment data, indicates that all groups make good progress overall as they move through the school. However, there are some minor inconsistencies in progress between teaching groups in English and mathematics. The school does not collect and analyse data for groups of pupils, and is not able to fully identify and take steps to address any relative weaknesses, thus ensuring standards are consistently good or outstanding.
- Standards of reading are good. Pupils show a positive attitude to reading, enjoying a wide range of literature and have strong skills that enable them to decode unfamiliar words. Teaching assistants play an important role in promoting these high standards as they regularly hear pupils read, and monitor their choice of books according to their ability level, ensuring there is suitable challenge and variety of texts.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning. The younger pupils in particular are highly enthusiastic learners, keen to answer questions and take part in activities. Pupils have good modern foreign language skills, and a secure understanding of scientific concepts. They have a good knowledge of the wider world through subjects such as geography and history. Their religious knowledge is particularly strong, and the older pupils show a well-developed ethical awareness.
- Many pupils learn to play a musical instrument, often in ensembles, and all pupils take part in various school productions. They enjoy these opportunities to work together and perform in public. They also develop a good range of physical skills through their involvement in physical education and sport lessons.

The early years provision is inadequate

- The leadership and management of the early years setting is inadequate because the regulatory failings with regard to safeguarding and recruitment also apply to the setting. Nevertheless, leaders know the children well, and have ensured good outcomes for the children that attend.
- Adults in the setting know their children well. Staff make careful and accurate assessments of their progress in all areas of learning. Their learning journeys (information from ongoing checks on their progress) are clear and detailed. However, although the information on individual pupils is clearly recorded, leaders do not have a clear overview of the progress made by groups of children, which would allow them to evaluate their provision more effectively.
- School observations and data indicate that most children enter the setting with a level of development typical for their age. Almost all leave the setting with a good level of development, including those with disabilities or special educational needs, and many exceed the expectations for their age, indicating that they make good progress. They have particular strengths in the development of their writing. By the end of their Reception year, children are well prepared for their transition to Year 1. For example, they benefit from opportunities to learn alongside the older children, gaining confidence and a familiarity with their new environment.
- Children's personal development is notably strong; they show outstanding social skills and work and play alongside each other harmoniously, sharing and taking turns. They are well-behaved, and keen to share their knowledge with visitors. There is a high standard of care. Relationships between adults and children are warm and supportive, and all children are well known to key staff. This helps to develop positive attitudes towards learning, and children are keen to attend.
- The children benefit from the good teaching. The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is effective; children use effective decoding strategies when faced with unfamiliar words. Some questioning does not always take account of the higher abilities of some children, and thus opportunities to extend their learning are missed.
- Children enjoy a rich range of experiences, fully in line with the requirements of the early years curriculum. The setting is well-resourced, and good use is made of outside areas to enhance their imagination and creativity. They develop a good understanding of their own and other cultures, and enjoy celebrating festivals such as Chinese New Year and Diwali.
- The setting has established good links with parents, and provides detailed information about routines and the progress of their children. The views of parents about the setting were highly positive.

The sixth form provision is inadequate

- The overall quality of sixth form provision is inadequate because of the school's failure to meet the relevant regulations to ensure the welfare, health and safety of students. However, leaders make outstanding provision for their individual needs through courses that are very well-matched to their abilities and aspirations.
- The personal development of sixth form students is outstanding. The school provides an excellent programme of activities which develop the leadership qualities, financial awareness and social skills of students. These include positions such as head of school, managing the school shop and a working alongside the children in the early years setting. Students also undertake external work placements, which are well-matched to their intended careers. They show a mature and conscientious attitude towards their studies and they are highly appreciative of the efforts made by the school to meet their needs and support their successful transition to higher education.
- No sixth form teaching took place during the inspection. However, student discussions and a scrutiny of assessment evidence indicate that good standards of teaching are in place. Teachers know the students very well, and take care to plan work suitable to their needs.

- Outcomes are good; students have successfully completed extended BTEC diploma courses that have enabled them to gain entry to highly selective higher education courses in subjects such as law.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the GOV.UK website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	122150
Inspection number	464865
DfE registration number	928/6063

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school

Type of school	Day
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	91
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	1
Number of part time pupils	29
Proprietor	Marion Brown and Corville Brown
Headteacher	Marion Brown
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 November 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,665 - £9,309
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