

School inspection report

7 November 2023 to 9 November 2023

Overstone Park School

Overstone Park
Northampton
NN6 0DT

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The principal, who is also the proprietor, prioritises the school's aim to enhance the ability, talent and skills of each pupil. The school is a positive community where most pupils engage constructively with their learning and grow in confidence. The school promotes and celebrates the diversity of its community effectively and pupils demonstrate tolerance and respect.
2. However, the proprietor's oversight of safeguarding is not effective. The proprietor does not ensure that recruitment checks of prohibition from teaching and management are always carried out before appointment. Online safety is not effective as pupils are able to access internet sites without suitable filtering and monitoring in place. Safeguarding records do not comply with current statutory guidance. In particular, safeguarding records are kept in diverse and not always secure places, rather than in appropriate secure and confidential files.
3. Staff understand the need to report any concerns about their colleagues and do so should they arise. The principal responds to these appropriately but currently there is no centralised record of such concerns.
4. The proprietor's most recent review of the safeguarding policy did not identify incorrect terminology and important contact details. This was amended during the inspection and now reflects the latest statutory guidance.
5. The proprietor ensures that the school is secure, that health and safety arrangements are appropriate and that suitable arrangements for managing the risk from fire, including regular fire drills, are implemented.
6. The teaching, including for the youngest children and those with particular needs, means that pupils make good progress from their starting points. Pupils' needs are well understood and they are treated with kindness and respect.
7. Many pupils require a level of individual support and care. Behaviour mentors play a vital and effective role in providing this. They build meaningful and positive relationships with pupils and their work helps to enable individual pupils to gain confidence and inter-personal skills effectively as they move through the school. However, at times, some pupils' behaviour can disrupt learning. Whilst these incidents are effectively dealt with, the disturbance created for others in teaching groups and in community areas is managed less effectively.
8. The proprietor arranges for pupils to engage with local communities, for example, by carrying out voluntary work in the local area. This broadens pupils' experiences and actively promotes their wellbeing.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards:

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not met
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met
- Standards relating to safeguarding are not met

Areas for action

- The proprietor must ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities:
 - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the Independent School Standards are met consistently, and
 - actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
- The proprietor must maintain effective oversight of the school's safeguarding policy and procedures so that safeguarding practice at the school meets statutory requirements.
- Leaders and managers must ensure that:
 - prohibition from teaching and management checks, where applicable, are carried out before staff commence working at the school
 - records of safeguarding concerns are kept in line with current statutory guidance
 - effective filtering and monitoring of internet usage is in place.

Recommended next steps

Leaders and managers should:

- ensure that the safeguarding policy is always updated to reflect the most recent statutory guidance
- ensure that effective measures are in place to minimise the impact of behaviour incidents on the learning of other pupils.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. The proprietor directs the planning for individual pupils' specific needs effectively and is present in the school to support staff and provide extra learning support for pupils when necessary. The school maintains close links with families and carers, and reports on pupils' progress are regular and detailed. This collaborative approach helps pupils to maintain progress over time.
10. The proprietor maintains effective procedures for site security. There are suitable risk assessments for the premises, activities and any trips undertaken. Leaders carefully consider pupils' needs and risks to vulnerable pupils, which they mitigate appropriately. Staff receive training in the use of restraint and in positive behaviour management which contributes to the development of pupils' self-management skills.
11. However, the oversight of safeguarding is not effective and has resulted in unmet Standards with regard to recruitment checks on prohibition from teaching and management, the recording and storage of safeguarding records and filtering and monitoring of internet usage. In addition, leaders corrected inaccuracies and omissions in the safeguarding policy during the inspection.
12. School leaders and staff demonstrate respect for others through their actions and teaching. Pupils learn from this to accept and show tolerance towards other members of the school community.
13. Leaders ensure that a suitable complaints policy is implemented effectively and they keep the necessary records. There have been no formal complaints since the previous inspection. The required information is made available and provided to parents on the school's website and by the school office.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

14. Standards are not met consistently with respect to safeguarding, with particular regard to online safety, the recording and storage of safeguarding records and the oversight and carrying out of prohibition from teaching and management checks.
15. As a result, Standards relating to governance, leadership and management are not met consistently.

Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

16. School leaders ensure that a suitable curriculum is delivered which takes account of the range of abilities and additional learning needs of pupils. It is focused on core subjects and skills such as literacy and numeracy, enabling pupils to make good progress. Leaders ensure that pupils develop their physical and creative skills effectively through a suitable physical education programme and effective provision for music, drama and art.
17. Leaders and teachers respond appropriately to the learning needs of pupils, including those identified in pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans. Staff create provision maps which outline strategies, and teachers and behaviour mentors use these effectively in their work with individual pupils. As a result of teacher focus on the successful completion of small steps in reading, writing skills and speech and language, pupils' confidence and skills develop.
18. In the nursery and prep school, teachers deliver lessons that are enjoyable and engaging. Nursery children listen attentively to storytelling. Children in Reception participated fully in acting out a sequence of events and older prep school pupils identified issues to discuss from picture stimuli. Speech and language therapists and other specialist staff support pupils' learning effectively. Staff closely observe recently arrived pupils to identify any additional needs that they may have. When individual pupils display challenging behaviour, staff manage this suitably and effectively.
19. In the high school leaders ensure that pupils continue to be supported in their progress individually and follow a broad curriculum appropriate to their needs with a focus on core skills. Pupils respond well to individual targets given and to a variety of activities. For instance, in science and mathematics and in information and communication technology (IT) lessons pupils respond well to challenges set and make good progress. In English they discuss issues effectively and develop their communication skills. Leaders set clear procedures for staff to use when dealing with challenging behaviour by pupils if, for example, they become frustrated while struggling to access lesson content. However, this behaviour sometimes affects the ability of others in the group to focus effectively on their work.
20. Leaders ensure that a variety of age-appropriate activities take place, such as preparing for the school musical performance of *Oliver!*, assisting in the care of the school's animals and trips into the local community. These increase pupils' understanding of the world around them and their development of life skills.
21. Pupils pursue a range of qualifications before they move on to further education settings or into employment. These include functional skills courses, Level 2 BTECs and a range of GCSEs where appropriate. Pupils also go on to study Level 3 qualifications and A levels. Results vary from year to year as the needs and abilities of each cohort differ. Recent destinations of leavers have been to further education colleges to follow a variety of courses, such as vocational qualifications in business studies, building and car mechanics. Some pupils go straight into employment and apprenticeships and the school maintains close links with local businesses that facilitate this.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

22. Leaders and teachers work closely with the families of pupils to understand and respond appropriately to pupils' needs. Adult behaviour mentors promote pupils' emotional wellbeing. As a result, pupils, including those who have arrived at the school with low self-esteem and high anxiety, feel valued as individuals and they gain in self-confidence.
23. The school has suitable personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes. These are delivered in a variety of ways, adapted appropriately to pupils' ages and need. In small teaching groups, pupils discuss personal matters, equality and their relationships with each other. The school has a Christian ethos and emphasizes the importance of being kind and the acceptance of others regardless of race or religion. Pupils reflect this teaching in their relationships with each other.
24. Staff, and in particular behaviour mentors, manage pupils' individual emotional and social needs well and respond sensitively to behavioural incidents, which are appropriately recorded in a centralised log so that patterns can be identified. Sanctions are clear and pupils typically understand them well.
25. Outside lesson times leaders provide effective activities to channel physical energy such as football and therapeutic boxing. The supervision of pupils is vigilant and effective. However, in some cases when a lot of pupils are gathered together, their behaviour is noisy which can disturb other pupils. During breaks and lunchtimes supervision in communal areas is appropriate. Pupils were observed arriving and leaving the school calmly under the careful supervision of staff.
26. School leaders provide effective initiatives to motivate pupils to behave appropriately and persevere by using rewards regularly and providing prizes at 'Praise and Reward' assemblies every fortnight. Pupils respond positively to these and are proud of their behavioural and academic achievements.
27. Bullying incidents are rare, but when they occur they are effectively dealt with and appropriately recorded. School leaders work with pupils involved in any behaviour incidents and with their families to resolve any ongoing issues.
28. School leaders implement appropriate site health and safety and fire safety procedures. There are regular fire evacuation drills and trained fire marshals. Pupils and staff demonstrate sound understanding of routes to exit the buildings. Registration procedures are satisfactory. School leaders take suitable steps regarding site security. For example, the perimeter is well fenced and entrances are only accessible via key pads. Early years children are always within sight and sound of the staff. Arrangements for administering first aid and the administration of medicines are suitable throughout the school and leaders keep appropriate records of any accidents.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

29. Relationships between pupils and staff are constructive and positive. School leaders demonstrate respect and consideration for others so that pupils learn to do the same as they develop their social skills. Leaders promote the value of diversity and as a result pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of accepting difference. They learn about service to others and the importance of making good and moral decisions.
30. School leaders have created well-established links with the local community which are used effectively to provide work experience for pupils as they finish their examinations in Year 11. This enables pupils to develop their experience and understanding of the world of work, for example in several local businesses, including a golf club. In some cases, these placements lead to permanent employment and apprenticeships.
31. The school appoints some older high school pupils as pupil leaders known as 'pupils with responsibilities'. Pupils carry out these responsibilities effectively. They include leading initiatives to raise money for charitable causes, representing the school at events such as the school musical and acting as role models for younger pupils.
32. Leaders and other staff provide pupils with individually tailored careers advice, enabling them to make suitable choices about their future and move on to suitable vocational courses. Younger pupils learn about possible career choices within PSHE, information and communication technology (ICT) and citizenship programmes which begin in the lower part of the high school.
33. Leaders encourage and enable pupils to contribute their ideas to school decision-making. For instance, pupils put forward ideas that resulted in leaders purchasing gym equipment and a climbing frame. Leaders also effectively encourage pupils to think about others less fortunate than themselves. As a result, pupils engage enthusiastically in events such as the annual fashion show to raise money for a variety of charitable causes.
34. Leaders ensure that pupils are aware of the importance of democracy, the rule of law and the ways in which society in Britain is governed. For instance, visits to the local police station help younger pupils understand the rule of law, and work on citizenship in PSHE lessons enables older pupils to understand and respect public service.
35. In PSHE, mathematics and business lessons, pupils learn about managing money using basic mathematical skills. Their work in food technology enables them to understand the cost of purchasing food items and the need for careful budgeting.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

36. The school's safeguarding policy required amendment at the beginning of the inspection to align its contents with the most recent statutory guidance and to reflect the school's current safeguarding practice. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) was new in post, but the safeguarding policy and notices around the school did not reflect this recent appointment.
37. Arrangements to implement the safeguarding policy do not currently meet the standards in several respects. Current recording arrangements are not consistent or secure. The proprietor does not ensure that careful, complete and confidential safeguarding records are kept separately and securely in line with current statutory guidance.
38. The school educates pupils about online safety in an age-appropriate way. However, pupils using the internet for their learning currently have unfiltered access to websites. In addition, the school does not monitor online activity effectively. No suitable filtering and monitoring system is in place.
39. Most safer recruitment checks are carried out in a timely manner and recorded on the single central record of appointments. Staff files contain documentation to verify dates on the central record. However, in appointments made since the previous inspection, prohibition from teaching and prohibition from management checks were not carried out on staff when appropriate. These checks were completed during the inspection and indicated that all staff are suitable to work in the school.
40. The DSL and deputy DSLs are appropriately trained at the required level and staff complete suitable safeguarding training online, including in relation to the Prevent duty. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of their training. They understand the need to report any concerns they may have about colleagues and do so when necessary. Any such concerns are currently recorded on staff files and followed up by the principal, but a log of low-level concerns is not kept as required by current statutory guidance.
41. The school refers safeguarding concerns about pupils to the local authority when appropriate, and does so effectively and promptly. The school has appropriate procedures to respond to any allegations or concerns about staff that may arise.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

42. Standards are not met consistently with respect to the keeping of safeguarding records, filtering and monitoring of internet usage, and prohibition from teaching and management checks.
43. As a result, Standards relating to safeguarding are not met consistently.

Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The relevant Standards are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34 (1)(a),(b) and (c)	<p>The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –</p> <p>(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently</p> <p>(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and</p> <p>(c) actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.</p>

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

The relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing

The relevant Standards are met.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic wellbeing and contribution to society

The relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

The relevant Standards are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, (7) (a) and (b) EYFS 3.4, 3.7 and 3.9	<p>The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that –</p> <p>(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and</p> <p>(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.</p> <p>3.4. Providers must be alert to any issues of concern in the child's life at home or elsewhere. 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 partners (LSP). The safeguarding policy and procedures must include an explanation of the action to be taken when there are safeguarding concerns about a child and in the event of an allegation being</p>

made against a member of staff, and cover the use of mobile phones and cameras in the setting. To safeguard children and practitioners online, providers will find it helpful to refer to 'Safeguarding children and protecting professionals in early years settings: online safety considerations'.

3.7. Providers must have regard to the government's statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and to the 'Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales'. All schools are required to have regard to the government's 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' statutory guidance, and other childcare providers may also find it helpful to refer to this guidance. If providers have concerns about children's safety or welfare, they must notify agencies with statutory responsibilities without delay. This means the local children's social care services and, in emergencies, the police.

3.9. Providers must ensure that people looking after children are suitable to fulfil the requirements of their roles. Providers must have effective systems in place to ensure that practitioners, and any other person who may have regular contact with children (including those living or working on the premises), are suitable.

School details

School	Overstone Park School
Department for Education number	941/6063
Address	Overstone Park School Overstone Park Northampton NN6 0DT
Website	overstoneparkschool.com
Proprietor	Mrs Marion Brown
Principal	Mrs Marion Brown
Age range	2 to 18
Number of pupils	138
Date of previous inspection	16 to 19 November 2021

Information about the school

44. Overstone Park School is an independent co-educational special school for pupils located in a rural setting close to Northampton. The school consists of a nursery, a prep school and a high school. Founded in 1983, the school is owned and governed by a sole proprietor who is also the school principal.
45. There are 15 children in the early years comprising 11 in the Nursery and 4 in Reception.
46. The school has identified 82 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. 77 pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
47. English is an additional language for two pupils.
48. The school states that its aims are to increase self-confidence in its pupils so that they can find learning pleasurable and rewarding and thus develop a sense of achievement and independence to make a difference.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 7 to 9 November 2023

49. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and half days.
50. Inspection activities included:
- interviews with teaching and support staff, the school's leaders and the proprietor
 - discussions with pupils
 - observations of lessons across the school
 - scrutiny of pupils' work in collaboration with pupils and staff
 - observations of activities
 - attendance at registration and assemblies
 - tour of the school site.
51. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit www.isi.net.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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