



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Regulatory Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Overstone Park School

November 2021

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School's Details

School	Overstone Park School			
DfE number	941/6063			
Address	Overstone Park School Overstone Park Northampton Northants NN6 0DT			
Telephone number	01604 643787			
Email address	opschool@aol.com			
Principal	Mrs Marion Brown			
Proprietors	Mr Corville Brown and Mrs Marion Brown			
Age range	2 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	73			
	Early years	12	Preparatory	30
	High school	31		
Inspection dates	16 to 19 November 2021			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Overstone Park School is an SEN independent co-educational day school. The school was founded in 1983 and is owned and governed by two joint proprietors, one of whom is the principal. The school comprises three sections: early years, for children aged 2 to 4 years; preparatory, for pupils aged 4 to 11 years; and high school, for pupils aged 11 to 18 years. The school is set in a fifteen-acre site in a rural location to the east of Northampton.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has embarked on a programme of refurbishment, which has included the installation of perimeter and playground fencing, re-cladding the exterior of the school, resurfacing the main playground and car parking areas, and renovating the Nursery's outdoor facilities, including the installation of climbing apparatus. In addition, a cabin has been built in the grounds for therapeutic activities to support individual pupils.
- 1.3 During the period June to August 2020, the school was open for children of key workers, vulnerable pupils and those pupils without access to the internet. For all other pupils, the school provided remote learning materials.
- 1.4 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered in part remotely and in part on site to reduce contact within the school.
- 1.5 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly related to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.6 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, the school remained open to all pupils.
- 1.7 In 2020 and 2021, public examinations were not held. For pupils who would have been expected to take these examinations, centre-assessed grades were awarded in 2020 and teacher-assessed grades in 2021.
- 1.8 Since 2020, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) profiles have not been externally moderated.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.9 The school wishes its pupils to feel valued, confident and secure so that they can develop a sense of achievement and find learning pleasurable and rewarding. It aims to provide them with a well-resourced environment in which they can develop self-control, independence and a spirit of adventure.

About the pupils

- 1.10 Most pupils have parents with professional and business backgrounds and live within a 10-mile radius of the school. The school's own assessment data indicate that the ability of pupils on entry to the school is below average compared with those taking the same national tests. The school has identified 35 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism and other conditions. Thirty-two pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for a very few pupils, who receive additional support for their English. The school identifies six pupils as being the more able in the school's population and the curriculum is modified for them.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

COVID-19: Inspection judgements do not cover the period March to August 2020 inclusive.

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 Pupils usually take GCSE examinations in their final year at the school. The small numbers involved prevent reliable comparison with national averages, but inspection evidence confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1, paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education in the preparatory school and relationships and sex education in the high school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

- Pupils enjoy and achieve well in areas beyond the academic, including dance, drama, music and sport.
- Pupils develop good study habits.
- Pupils are resilient in overcoming individual barriers to learning.
- Pupils do not always achieve their best in a range of academic subjects.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.

- Pupils appreciate the importance and value of diversity.
- Pupils develop positive relationships with their peers and with staff.
- Pupils display a firm commitment to serving the wider community, which supports the school's ethos and aims.
- Pupils do not always develop their personal skills to the full.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Strengthen pupils' academic achievement by ensuring teaching consistently captures their interest, provides sufficient challenge and sets clear next steps for learning.
- Enable pupils to further develop their personal skills by working more collaboratively with other learners in the different sections of the school.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

3.5 Across the school pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND and EAL make good progress in a range of subjects in relation to their individual starting points. They achieve well in their academic studies and in their extra-curricular activities because leaders, teachers and support staff provide a friendly environment where all pupils receive the help they need to support their learning. Pupils are able to complete functional skills courses in English and mathematics, as well as GCSE subjects, including art and design, biology, chemistry, citizenship, computer science, English language and literature, mathematics, science and religious studies. Many begin the school as disaffected learners.

Individual levels of success vary, but outcomes generally indicate that pupils are overcoming their difficulties. The number of pupils in the school is too small for comparison of its GCSE results with national averages to be meaningful. Comparison of the number and range of qualifications does show a trend of increased success in the last two years. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires, most parents agreed that teaching enables their children to make progress. Personalised experiences, nurturing support and increasingly rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders has helped pupils to overcome barriers to learning.

- 3.6 Pupils demonstrate good knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects. For example, in the preparatory school pupils thoroughly enjoyed taking responsibility and showing understanding for the guinea pigs on the school farm. Similarly in science, pupils worked enthusiastically to design and cut out their own shapes to illustrate how shadows are created. Here they were able to give clear explanations of the concept of moving shadows. In English, younger pupils' books showed good levels of understanding of basic grammatical concepts. Older pupils' books demonstrated good subject knowledge in physics and chemistry through well-presented work. This included competent writing, analysis of data and the use of subject-specific vocabulary such as relative motion, momentum and distance-time graph in physics and oxidising, reducing agents and reactions in chemistry.
- 3.7 A small minority of pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire disagreed that their lessons were interesting and that teachers' marking helped them to improve. Inspectors also found that some lessons did not always capture pupils' attention and interest from the outset with suitably challenging activities. They found that pupils' demonstration of knowledge and skills is strongest when the task invites them to explore the theme at hand in detail, and when marking highlights precisely how to strengthen pupil outcomes. For example, in a religious studies lesson, high school pupils were able to discuss confidently some of the central concepts of the Jewish faith. Here, the more able pupils were able to highlight the differences between orthodox and secular Judaism with good levels of accuracy and by using appropriate vocabulary such as Seder and Passover (Pesach).
- 3.8 Pupils employ their information and communication technology (ICT) skills proficiently to support and extend their learning. For example, older high school pupils used study videos effectively to revise for their GCSE history examination. In mathematics, younger high school pupils had set up their individual accounts, based on their current mathematical standards. This enabled them to access learning resources that steadily progressed in difficulty, allowing them to improve their skills. During their discussion with inspectors, pupils were able to explain how they used their ICT skills to help produce the school's termly newsletter.
- 3.9 Pupils, including children in the early years, demonstrate good communication and reading skills. For example, children were observed listening attentively to a five-minute story about *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and in another early years class, most children were able to identify confidently the letters of the alphabet. In the preparatory school, pupils in science were able to map out a written plan on a whiteboard, in preparation for making puppets. Here, all pupils demonstrated that they were able to focus on the writing task in hand, working diligently and listening carefully to instructions. In a citizenship lesson, high school pupils were able to deploy a range of critical vocabulary in discussing questions of nationality and the role of nurture in articulating aspects of identity. The more able pupils readily assimilated the terminology they would need to incorporate into their extended writing in order to achieve higher GCSE grades.
- 3.10 Pupils across the school develop good numeracy skills and apply them well in a range of subjects. For example, in the preparatory school, younger pupils were able to develop their confidence in mathematics by relying on fewer and fewer prompts to chant aloud their two-times table. In GCSE mathematics, pupils were considering the concept of estimation in terms of how it contrasted with the notion that mathematics is based on accuracy and precision. Here pupils began to understand that estimation is part of everyday life as well as the importance of accuracy in making sense of problems and showing perseverance in solving them.

- 3.11 Pupils demonstrate good study skills as a result of the positive classroom ethos that staff create. This helps them to feel valued and secure and gives them the confidence and resilience to begin to take some initiative for their learning. In the preparatory school, pupils in an English lesson were observed proof-reading an extract independently. Here, good work habits and effective classroom routines were established to ensure that pupils always checked their written work for errors before handing it in. Similarly, after watching a video clip about those less fortunate than themselves, preparatory pupils thoughtfully considered their response, and completed a comprehension exercise designed to test their observation skills. In art, high school pupils displayed skills of perseverance and persistence as they worked through the different stages of a task exploring preferred textures in a 3D extended project. Pupils showed confidence and autonomy in exploring how textures, including fabric, natural materials and found objects could stimulate creativity in their representations of reptiles.
- 3.12 Pupils are successful both within and beyond the school in dance, music, sport and activities such as horse riding and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Before the pandemic, pupils were successful in public examinations in dance and music. They take great delight in participating in this term's productions of *The Little Match Girl* and *A Christmas Carol*. Here, pupils were observed developing a range of skills that help them to become more confident and assured when they present themselves in public. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, most parents agreed that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils thoroughly appreciate recognition in the half termly awards and annual speech day ceremonies, which rewards achievement across the academic curriculum and extra-curricular programme. In 2018, ten pupils had stories and poems published through the Young Writers competition.
- 3.13 Pupils' positive attitudes to learning can be seen in classrooms and beyond. Pupils are encouraged to adopt a 'can do' attitude. The belief being that, although they may struggle to do things at first, with sufficient application, determination and hard work they will succeed in all that they do. This is very much encouraged by school leaders driving the school's vision and ethos by ensuring that pupils feel valued, confident and secure so that they can develop a sense of achievement and find learning pleasurable and rewarding.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.14 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.
- 3.15 From the early years to the high school, pupils demonstrate appropriate levels of self-knowledge and self-confidence and feel valued as individuals. Pupils are able to discuss the challenges they have experienced in life and to speak openly about their learning difficulties. They do well in an environment that inspires them to make a positive contribution to their community and to their own personal development. For example, the whole school assembly demonstrated well how they remain engaged and motivated by the school's rewards system. They value the understanding and support given to them by staff which provides a springboard to their success. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, most parents agreed that the school encourages their children to be more confident and independent.
- 3.16 Pupils make wise and sensible decisions. They understand that key choices made in school will affect their future lives. For example, pupils demonstrate the ability to make balanced decisions about matters of everyday life by organising themselves well during the school day. In interviews with pupils, inspectors found that those in Year 11 had made very clear decisions about the next stages of their education. The majority feel that the school's careers guidance has helped them to make appropriate choices. The pre-inspection parent questionnaires showed that most respondents believe that the school offers helpful advice about subject choices and careers. Within and beyond the classroom, pupils approach their tasks with perseverance, encouraged by the pervading 'can do' ethos. For example, pupils learn how to act decisively when faced with physical or mental challenges when for example in completing tasks for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

- 3.17 Pupils show appreciation of the non-material and spiritual aspects of life, expressing it in music, art, dance and drama. They understand how the personal challenges that they and their peers have faced can have a profound effect upon their sense of what is important in life. As a result, they are respectful of each other's feelings and perceptions. For example, children in the early years, demonstrated a strong moral sense when they reflected and discussed the rules for life. Pupils learn how to understand the importance of doing something they enjoy and how music and singing can have a therapeutic effect in lifting their mood. Assembly themes, based on the school's Christian values are thoughtfully chosen so that they provide space and time for pupils to reflect on their feelings.
- 3.18 Pupils demonstrate a keen sense of social development and community. They have a good understanding of right and wrong. They are usually polite and listen to adults and one another respectfully. In preparatory, pupils were observed working independently by taking responsibility for running their mathematics game. However, inspectors observed that across the school some pupils had not yet developed their personal skills sufficiently to enable them to work collaboratively with learners from different sections of the school.
- 3.19 In the pre-inspection questionnaires, all parents felt that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. For example, in a citizenship lesson, high school pupils developed a good understanding of how identities can be shaped by nature or nurture. Here, they demonstrated a good deal of empathy and sensitivity in discussing these differences. They then debated which ones might be more valid than others and that the distinction is not always easily defined. In high school, older pupils in a personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson were engaged in discussing how bullying can develop and its various definitions. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, and in discussions, all pupils reported that they behave well and that the school teaches them how to build positive relationships and friendships by respecting each other.
- 3.20 Pupils' respect for diversity and cultural understanding is excellent. Most are highly respectful of diversity within their community and are prepared to have open discussions about religion, ethnicity and gender. They learn about other cultures and the diversity of societies in subjects across the curriculum and assemblies, where they regularly celebrate festivals from around the world. These experiences and understanding are supported by the school's ethos and values, which are designed to ensure all pupils feel valued and respected.
- 3.21 Pupils have a thoughtful awareness of British society and the role of the democratic process, public institutions and services. They are also respectful of the full range of disabilities and of the needs of others who may be discriminated against in society. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, all parents who responded agreed that the school treats their children fairly, regardless of their faith, gender or needs.
- 3.22 Pupils' knowledge of how to stay healthy and safe is good. Senior leaders place a high priority on helping them to stay safe and ensure that all staff are suitably trained in safeguarding procedures. All pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that the school is a safe place to be, that they know how to stay safe when online and that they are taught about safety. For example, following an accidental spillage of orange juice in the early years, children showed great concern for the inspector's safety by explaining the dangers of slippery floors and the necessity of erecting a yellow hazard wet floor sign. In the high school, pupils learn about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle through discussion and debates in assemblies and lessons. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, all parents stated that the school ensures that their children learn in a safe environment and almost all parents agreed that staff looked after their children well.
- 3.23 Pupils' contribution to others, the school and the community is good. They take great pride in contributing to society by raising money for a number of charities based in the United Kingdom and overseas. They develop a strong sense of duty and service by regularly taking part in sponsored events ranging from car washing to fashion shows. Their support for a number of international charities demonstrates much thoughtfulness and empathy. For example, in the early years, children were able

to recall the story of how a particular charity day began. In the high school, each house sponsors a child in a developing country through the *Compassion for Children Scheme*. Participation in these activities and house sports teams helps to develop their empathy with others, particularly those less fortunate than themselves.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor, observed and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr David Scott	Reporting inspector
Mrs Sue La Farge	Accompanying inspector
Mr Bob Ukiah	Compliance team inspector
Mr Mike Crossley	Team inspector (Headteacher, IAPS school)
Mr Ben Edwards	Team inspector (Former head of sixth form, HMC school)