

# Overley Hall School

Wellington, Telford, Shropshire TF6 5HE

## Inspection dates

9–11 July 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Sixth form provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leadership has improved since the last inspection. Leaders' strategic oversight is stronger. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Robust governance has a positive impact on school improvement. Systems to monitor the school's performance have developed significantly.
- Leaders have created a calm, caring climate where pupils are able to thrive. Pupils attend well and make good progress.
- Outcomes for pupils are good. Pupils develop academically and socially. Almost all pupils make strong progress from their individual starting points.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Staff are 'in tune' with pupils. They know how to support them effectively. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are decreasing over time.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is personalised to meet the needs of individual pupils. Pupils enjoy a range of academic and vocational experiences.
- Leaders have ensured that all independent school standards are met.
- The role of middle leaders has developed since the last inspection. As a result, these leaders say they are empowered to improve the school.
- Teachers typically plan lessons matched to pupils' individual needs and interests. On rare occasions where teachers do not respond to pupils' curiosity, teaching is less effective. Learning could be moved on more quickly.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff are highly vigilant and appropriately trained. They leave nothing to chance when it comes to the safety of pupils.
- The school provides enriching experiences to develop pupils spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Pupils enjoy learning about the wider world.
- The provision for post-16 students is effective. Students who remain at the school are well prepared for their next phases.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further strengthen teaching and learning so that all pupils, including those in the sixth form achieve best possible outcomes by making sure all teachers:
  - consistently base new learning on what pupils know and can already do
  - move learning on when pupils are secure in their understanding and application of skills
  - respond to pupils' interests to maximise their learning experiences.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders have created a happy, child-centred school. This vision is shared by all members of the school community. Pupils want to attend. They thrive in a school where they are understood and supported. Leaders and the proprietor have made sure all independent school standards are met.
- Leadership of the school has improved since the last inspection. Systems for self-evaluation of the school's performance have been strengthened. The senior leadership team now has a much more accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They plan for improvement effectively.
- The role of the middle leaders has evolved since the last inspection. These leaders have clearly defined roles and their strategic involvement has increased. They make an effective contribution to school improvement. Staff who met with the inspector said they felt empowered to do their jobs. They say they feel supported by an approachable leadership team.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It equips pupils with academic experiences as well as many opportunities to develop and grow as an individual. Pupils study core subjects including English, mathematics and science. Pupils also enjoy practical and vocational experiences including art, cookery, forest school, drama and physical education. Learning is effectively supported by a wide range of good-quality resources including communication aids and sensory equipment.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning. The school has effective quality assurance systems to review the quality of teaching. Leaders have high expectations for teaching. They tackle underperformance quickly and provide appropriate support. Staff appreciate training and development opportunities.
- All of the pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They all have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school's work to meet individual needs is impressive. Leaders take account of individual needs. They make sure the curriculum is tailored to suit all pupils. Interventions are appropriate and timely. Pupils benefit from targeted support. Leaders regularly review the impact of their work. They make sure that pupils are making progress towards their individual planned outcomes.
- Leaders make sure pupils have rich, purposeful opportunities to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. They often arrive at the school with limited social experiences. Visits and activities are carefully planned to meet pupils' individual needs. Pupils are actively involved in community experiences such as supporting the local church through gardening projects and fundraising. They learn about a range of cultures and differences. They sample foods from around the world. As a result, pupils learn about the world around them and develop social skills. They learn to take turns and make appropriate choices.
- Leaders engage well with parents and carers. Activities and open days are well supported. Parents say their views are listened to. Parents receive regular detailed progress reports. They know exactly how well their children are doing at the school. Parents who spoke

with the inspector say they are happy with the school. They would recommend the school to others.

## **Governance**

- Since the last inspection, the governance of the school has improved. A board of governors has been assembled. The board is chaired on an interim basis by the school improvement partner. The board is made up of a range of professionals and parents who bring a range of skills to the school. The chair provides essential training and support for all governors. Governors now have a greater understanding of their role and their function within the school.
- The headteacher produces detailed reports of the school's performance. Although governance is newly established, the board has sharp oversight of all aspects of the school's work. It provides appropriate challenge and holds school leaders to account for school improvement. Meetings are well attended and focus on key aspects of the school's performance.
- The school development plan has been refined since the last inspection. Actions are clear and measurable. As a result, governors are in a far stronger position to accurately monitor plans and drive school improvement.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's safeguarding policy is comprehensive. It is written with regard to current legislation issued by the Secretary of State. It outlines the process to follow if there are concerns about the welfare of a child. The policy is published on the website. Paper copies are also available.
- The school has three designated safeguarding leads. They are knowledgeable and trained to an appropriate level. They know about risks in the local area. They have a clear understanding of the role. Safeguarding is a high priority within the school.
- Staff have completed relevant training. They know how to recognise the signs of abuse and neglect. They know about child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. They are also aware of their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' agenda. There is a high level of vigilance. Staff are quick to report anything that concerns them when it comes to the safety of pupils.
- Across the curriculum, pupils are taught how to keep safe. They learn about road safety and stranger danger. Pupils learn how to keep safe online and within the community. Leaders make sure that all activities are suitably risk assessed. Pupils can use talking mats as communication aids to share any concerns. They use a range of picture and emotion cards to communicate their feelings. Pupils say they feel safe at school.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- The learning environments are warm and welcoming. Positive relationships underpin all learning experiences. Teachers know their pupils well. They take an interest in pupils' likes and dislikes. Most teachers use this detail and previous information to plan learning around relevant themes and sensory experiences that motivate pupils. They see when

pupils are experiencing difficulties and quickly make appropriate adaptations. Pupils are well supported by teaching assistants who know them well. Staff have high expectations of all pupils.

- There is a whole-school focus on developing pupils' communication skills. The environment is language-rich with lots of opportunities to use new words. Skilful staff support pupils to use communication aids and sensory stories to strengthen their vocabulary. Pupils use these aids with ease and participate fully in learning experiences.
- The work on setting objectives for learning has improved since the last inspection. Objectives for pupils are clearer. They are supported by visual representations to aid understanding. They are reviewed throughout lessons to make sure pupils know what is expected of them. Carefully planned routines within the classroom support pupils well. Pupils know the order of their learning and respond well to the structure.
- Teachers make sure pupils have many opportunities to practise their skills. In mathematics, pupils learn how to apply skills in practical settings. For example, they use their counting skills in forest school and cookery. Pupils also enjoy listening to the story of 'The Hungry Caterpillar'. They make caterpillar models using their counting skills. This helps to reinforce learning and memory. Where appropriate, pupils respond well to challenging questions relating to shapes and colours. They show a good level of resilience. They are motivated to learn and get things right.
- The school follows a thematic curriculum. Topics are interesting and allow teachers to plan creative learning opportunities across all subjects. Themes such as 'My Health' explore how to be healthy and how to keep physically fit. In forest school, pupils learn about how things grow. These experiences help pupils to understand the subject content and apply it to different areas.
- In English, pupils are engrossed in sensory stories. They enjoy the feel, sounds and textures of resources that accompany a story. They listen intently and participate with actions and verbal interactions. Pupils practise letter formation frequently; as a result, their fine motor skills develop over time. Pictures and visual aids are used to good effect to explore language and communication.
- On the whole, pupils' engagement in what they are doing is strong. Most teachers carefully plan lessons that are engaging and fun. They make sure teaching is based on what pupils already know and can do. Where this is most successful, pupils' interest is sustained throughout. On rare occasions, teachers do not respond to what pupils are curious about. This limits the chance to maximise pupils' learning and engagement. Occasionally, teachers missed the opportunity to move learning on when pupils were already secure in their skills.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. All adults know pupils well. They understand pupils' individual needs. Transition into school is well planned and supported. As a result, pupils who have previously struggled to come to school arrive on time and move around with confidence.

- School staff and the therapy team work cohesively to provide appropriate personalised support for pupils. Staff know pupils well and understand which strategies are effective when supporting learning. They make swift refinements where necessary. They are always keen to learn new ways of working when it comes to providing support for pupils.
- The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is a major strength of the school. Pupils learn about friendships, relationships and how to stay healthy. They know how to stay safe in school, within the community and online. Pupils learn how to budget. They apply these skills when out shopping or helping to restock the tuck shop.
- Careers education has been further developed since the last inspection. The school is well supported by agencies from within the local authority. Staff make sure that pupils access impartial advice and guidance. Pupils attend regular college open days and careers fairs. The farm shop business enterprise setting helps pupils to develop essential work skills. Pupils work in the shop on a weekly basis in a variety of roles including serving customers, waiting at tables and cleaning. Pupils are well supported to move on into their next phases.
- Pupils have many opportunities to express their views. Leaders welcome feedback from pupils through regular debrief sessions. These sessions allow pupils to express themselves using talking mats. Pupils reflect on issues and work through solutions. These sessions help pupils to share concerns and positive experiences. Leaders also use this to gain the views of pupils. Pupils have input into the curriculum, choosing activities and making suggestions for the lunch menu.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The behaviour policy is clear and is applied consistently by all staff. There are high expectations of behaviour. All staff work collectively to support pupils. They help pupils to develop strategies to regulate their own behaviour. As a result, over time, pupils learn ways to cope with difficulties and reduce negative behaviours.
- Since the last inspection, leaders and the clinical team have worked collaboratively with school staff to improve pupils' personal behaviour support plans. All staff have a greater understanding of situations pupils may find difficult. They respond immediately and make appropriate adaptations to promote positive behaviour.
- Staff manage challenging behaviour swiftly with minimal impact on learning experiences. Often, pupils return quickly to their learning activities. This collective understanding of pupils' behaviour has led to a reduction in incidents. The use of physical intervention has decreased over time.
- Pupils learn about kind and unkind behaviour. The therapy team and all teachers work carefully with pupils after incidents occur. They help them to understand their behaviour and identify ways they can make positive changes. The school reports no cases of bullying. Surveys of pupils' views also show that this is the case.
- The school's work to support positive behaviour goes way beyond surface level. Every incident is routinely debriefed. Reflective sessions are used effectively to analyse and review incidents. Staff welcome support and strategies from the clinical team. They use this information well to support pupils and help them to self-regulate. Careful

consideration is given to new strategies, environmental changes and risk assessments to continually support better behaviour.

- Attendance is a significant strength of the school. A high proportion of pupils missed out on education for considerable time prior to joining the school. Transitions into school are well planned. There is a high emphasis on the importance of attending school. As a result, pupils arrive on time and settle quickly into their learning.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**Good**

- All pupils have experienced disrupted learning before arriving at the school. Many have also accessed several previous placements. They arrive at the school with low starting points and gaps in learning.
- There is a high emphasis on developing communication skills. Pupils are immersed in language-rich experiences. The environment is well resourced with displays, signs and prompt words to support language development. This helps pupils to learn new words and where appropriate construct simple sentences. Verbally and through communication aids, pupils use new vocabulary over time. Their communication skills are improving.
- Each pupil has an individualised learning plan based on his or her EHC targets. The school's information shows that most pupils are making good progress towards their individual planned outcomes.
- Pupils' physical skills develop over time. The school is supported by occupational therapy specialists who assess pupils' physical needs and identify areas of difficulty. Adaptations are made to the learning environment. Specialist equipment is used to improve posture and balance, for example. As a result, pupils are better supported to take part in learning experiences.
- Teachers use a range of standardised packages and their own systems to assess pupils' abilities and needs upon entry to the school. Most teachers use this information well to plan learning that is matched to their individual needs. On rare occasions, when this is not as effective, pupils' progress is limited.
- The work in pupils' books shows strong progress over time. Pupils' fine motor skills are developed through support. They develop better pencil control and are able to copy letters and short words.
- Destinations for pupils who left during the last academic year are positive. Pupils successfully moved on to vocational learning at local education providers.

### **Sixth form provision**

**Good**

- The sixth form has developed considerably since the last inspection. It now has a dedicated leadership team who strategically oversee all aspects of performance. The profile of the sixth form has been raised and a much higher emphasis placed on opportunities for students. Post-16 students have an identity within the school.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the sixth form's strengths. The development plan is comprehensive and based on appropriate actions to secure improvement.

- Although sixth-form students are taught alongside younger pupils, they follow a personalised programme suited to their individual needs. There is a strong focus on preparing for independence. Pupils learn valuable life skills and develop their social and emotional resilience. Students have regular opportunities to practise their skills in other areas of the curriculum. They learn to apply English and mathematics in practical settings. Teachers regularly revisit previous learning to make sure skills are committed to memory.
- Post-16 students are well supported by the careers adviser. They learn about a range of opportunities and explore jobs through 'sensory baskets'. Pupils visit local colleges and are well supported in making informed decisions for their next phases.
- The vocational aspect of the sixth form is good. Leaders have created a number of real and meaningful roles around the site. Pupils enjoy working in the farm shop and tuck shop. They participate in jobs around the school grounds and offices. Pupils are expected to stick to job descriptions and complete set tasks. Pupils enjoy these experiences. As a result, their confidence develops and they are well prepared for their next phases.
- Students engage well in a variety of vocational opportunities. Students' work reflects strong engagement across the curriculum. Outcomes in the sixth form are good. Pupils make good progress academically and socially and emotionally.
- The post-16 curriculum meets requirements.



## School details

Unique reference number	123621
DfE registration number	894/6003
Inspection number	10105911

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	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Anita Brown
Chair	Sarah Morgan
Headteacher	Beverley Doran
Annual fees (day pupils)	£97,317.42
Telephone number	01952 740 262
Website	<a href="http://www.overleyhall.com">www.overleyhall.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@overleyhall.com">info@overleyhall.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	18–20 September 2018

## Information about this school

- Overley Hall School is an independent special school for pupils aged eight to 19 years. The school offers places for up to 24 pupils with SEND, including autism spectrum conditions and complex needs. All of the pupils have an EHC plan.
- Pupils are placed at the school by a number of local authorities including Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin.

- The school is located near Telford, Shropshire. The school block is situated within extensive grounds and woodlands. The school has a number of classroom spaces. Pupils are also able to access a cinema room, a hydrotherapy pool and a farm shop.
- The school's last full standard inspection was in September 2018, when it was judged to require improvement.
- The school does not make use of alternative providers. The school provides extensive opportunities for pupils to access the local community.

## Information about this inspection

- This unannounced full standard inspection was conducted by Ofsted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The inspection was carried out as a result of a number of concerns raised.
- The inspector met with the proprietor and the chair of governors, who is also the school improvement partner. Meetings were also held with the headteacher, school leaders and teaching staff. A meeting was also held with members of the therapy team.
- The inspector, accompanied by school leaders, observed teaching across all key stages. A number of lessons were visited including in English, mathematics, humanities, cookery and drama. Work in pupils' books was also reviewed across key stages.
- A tour of the school premises was undertaken, accompanied by the headteacher.
- A number of key policies were scrutinised including those for safeguarding, admissions, complaints and behaviour. The inspector also reviewed the school's single central register.
- A small number of responses to Ofsted's survey for parents were considered. The inspector also took into account views of parents obtained by the school.

## Inspection team

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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