

The Oldershaw School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105104
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	336426
Inspection dates	01–02 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Mrs Gillian Salter-Smith

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	851
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	134
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr I Cubbin
Headteacher	Mr S Peach
Date of previous school inspection	October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. More than half of inspectors' time was spent looking at students' learning. The inspectors visited 42 lessons, and observed 41 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff, the national challenge adviser, external partners and groups of students. They observed the school's work, including an assembly, the dining areas and the outdoor areas. Documents looked at included the self-evaluation form, the school development and raising attainment plans, the data on students' progress and attainment, and policies with regard to safeguarding students. Ninety eight questionnaires were received from parents, 57 from staff and 95 from pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the attainment, learning and progress of current students, especially for mathematics, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those joining the school mid key stage
- the consistency in the effectiveness of teaching and use of assessment to support planning and learning
- outcomes and provision in the sixth form
- the pattern of attendance
- whether the school's outstanding judgements for many aspects of its outcomes and provision are justified.

Information about the school

The number of students on roll is below the national average. There are more boys than girls compared to most schools. The proportion of students eligible for a free school meal is well above the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement, is well above average. A well above average number of students join the school or leave at times other than the usual start in Year 7. Most students are of White British heritage. Of the small number from minority ethnic backgrounds a very few are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. There are a very small number of looked after children.

The school has been a specialist Business & Enterprise college since September 2007. The school includes a resourced centre with funding for 25 students with moderate learning difficulties: The Learning Centre. It is an extended school. Awards for good practice include the DCSF award for good practice in Inclusion (2008), Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark, Healthy School Award, Arkwright and Nuffield Scholarships, the Athenaeum Literary Prize, the National Parliamentary Press Prize, the Recognition of Quality Award for Work Related and Enterprise, the Chartered Management Institute's Leadership programme award, the Career Academy programme award and the National Association of Writers in Education Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Oldershaw is a good school. Exceptional commitment and drive from leaders at all levels, including governors, have succeeded in providing a highly supportive environment in which students feel safe and secure and very well supported. Behaviour is good and students are proud of their school. The relentless focus on improvement has resulted in accelerating progress and rapidly improving attainment so that students' achievement is good. Students make an outstanding contribution to the school and the local community often through using their exceptional leadership skills to support others within the school and the wider community.

The school's very strong determination to ensure that all students succeed, whatever their circumstances or background, is reflected in the high levels of care, guidance and support provided. Staff are prepared to go that extra mile to support students in gaining the qualifications of which they are capable and in finding ways to support students, particularly those who face significant barriers to their learning. Staff work exceptionally well in partnership with parents and a myriad of local agencies to find the right support for individual students and their families. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit a great deal from the excellent care provided and the highly tailored support that supports their outstanding progress.

The excellent curriculum is very carefully planned with the support of highly successful partnerships with local providers. As a result, students and particularly those in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, follow courses that are very well matched to their interests and needs. The school's specialist status for business and enterprise has broadened the curriculum significantly helping many students to gain level 2 qualifications in enterprise, business, and information and communication technology (ICT) courses. The innovative arrangements for Year 7 and 8 students, 'The Project', help them to settle into school quickly and make good progress.

Students' good achievement is reflected in national data on progress that has placed them in the top 10% of schools over the past three years. From well below average starting points most students reach broadly average standards of attainment, although attainment is not as strong in mathematics. Improved systems for assessing and tracking students' progress are being used effectively to raise students' aspirations and identify and tackle underachievement quickly. Teaching is good overall and most students enjoy learning and make good progress. There are, however, inconsistencies in some features of teaching that, although recognised

within the school's monitoring systems, have not always been tackled fully and eliminated.

Governors are highly challenging of leaders and make a strong contribution to monitoring and evaluation processes. The school knows itself well recognising both its strengths and priorities. Since the last inspection the school's good capacity to improve has been demonstrated in improved achievement and attainment, greatly improved attendance, more effective teaching and assessment, and a curriculum that offers activities that students enjoy and supports good achievement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further, particularly in mathematics by:
 - using assessment information more precisely to provide challenging tasks for every student
 - improving the pace and structure of lessons so that students are more actively engaged in learning
 - ensuring that all marking provides useful guidance to students on the next steps to take in learning
 - setting consistently high expectations of presentation of written work.

- Find more ways to share best practice in teaching and learning in order to eliminate inconsistencies.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students respond well to good relationships with staff, enjoy most lessons and develop positive attitudes to learning. Students apply themselves well to tasks and work well in pairs and groups. They are developing confidence in becoming independent learners. A Year 11 French group worked very well independently to practise a speaking task in pairs. Their clear understanding of the criteria against which they are assessed helped them to identify how they could make improvements. Occasionally, students lose interest in learning and their low level chatter is allowed to slow the pace of lessons down.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make exceptional progress because of the holistic approach that is taken to meet both personal and academic needs. Furthermore, extensive curriculum arrangements and courses in both Key Stage 3 and 4 are planned carefully to best serve individual student needs.

All groups of students, including those who join the school mid key stage, achieve well as is reflected in the national indicators for achievement. Standards are rising rapidly and are broadly average. In 2009, the proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes was significantly above the national average but attainment in English and mathematics was not as good. School data on current students' progress, accredited assessments already taken and their written work indicate considerable improvement and that the school has already exceeded its challenging targets for English and mathematics with English stronger than mathematics.

Students' significantly improved attendance is having a positive impact on achievement. Great pride in their school is developing as students are given more and more of a say in how their school functions. Students are especially keen to support others less fortunate than themselves and make exceptionally valiant efforts to raise funds for a variety of charities. Students have a good understanding of right and wrong and are encouraged to reflect on the consequences of their actions. They take a positive interest in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Although highly involved in the local community, students' understanding of the many cultures that compose the wider United Kingdom community is more limited. Through participation in many enterprise and business related activities, students develop a wide range of skills including secure ICT skills. These, together with their increasing confidence in applying their basic skills of literacy and numeracy, prepare them satisfactorily for their futures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop [workplace and other skills]/[skills] that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Most lessons are good and some are outstanding. Effective lessons are planned well with a good variety of tasks that quickly involve students. Good use is made of ICT to help maintain students' interest. Tasks and questioning are challenging and students are encouraged to work independently. The purpose of lessons is made clear and good use is made of examination criteria to help guide students in the next steps in learning. Teachers give frequent support and guidance to individuals during lessons and often involve students in evaluating their own progress. Progress is checked frequently through probing questioning. However, inconsistencies in the effectiveness of some features of teaching remain. In a small minority of lessons, assessment information is not always used precisely enough to provide challenging tasks for every student. The pace of learning can be slowed down because tasks are not varied enough, and teachers talk for too long and do not encourage students to work independently. Marking varies in quality and does not always provide useful guidance to students on the next steps to take in learning and some weak presentation of written work is accepted, particularly in mathematics.

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

The school's highly innovative approach to curriculum development is having a significant impact on students' achievement, attendance and attitudes. The very wide range of vocational courses offered, often in response to community needs, is helping students achieve good outcomes. There is a strong focus on supporting students in gaining accreditations in English and mathematics. The Project course for Year 7 and 8 students is very popular with students and is helping them gain good basic learning skills in literacy, working with others and in completing tasks. The nurture group provides a very appropriate environment for vulnerable students and the express group for more able students ensures these students are challenged. Students value and enjoy the school's very good range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits.

Students have great confidence in the staff who they say are always there to help and encourage them to do well, particularly when they are preparing for examinations. Very full assessment of students' individual needs from the time they enter the school, especially if they join mid key stage, enables the right support to be found for students and their families, particularly those most vulnerable. Staff leave no stone unturned in seeking support. The Learning Centre functions very effectively in providing support for students and their families. Looked after children are very well supported and as a result, have achieved very well. Staff work very closely with parents in assuring a high level of support for students.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Very strong leadership has established high expectations of students, staff and themselves. It has focused on the right priorities and established the school not only as a highly caring community that ensures that every student succeeds, but also as a focal point for community activity and support, often through the Extended School activities. Rigorous monitoring of students' progress has helped to identify priorities. National Challenge guidance has supported the development of middle leaders and led to greater accountability for student progress and higher levels of support for underachieving students. The recent focus on improving the use of assessment by leaders and subject teachers has helped to raise aspirations of students, parents and staff. As a result, challenging targets are increasingly being met and exceeded. Teaching is monitored closely and programmes of professional development are focused on school priorities and individual needs. Some inconsistencies in teaching have not been picked up quickly enough, nor has best practice been shared often enough, to ensure inconsistencies are eliminated.

Experienced and knowledgeable governors seek innovative ways to ensure long-term development and improvement of the school. Governors are very rigorous in

fulfilling their statutory requirements with regard to the safeguarding of students. Training of staff in safeguarding students is thorough and up to date. Checks on staff recruitment are thorough and school security is robust.

The school is highly inclusive and students' needs are looked at carefully. Staff work very effectively in partnership with parents to ensure that any barriers are overcome. The success of this is reflected in students' achievement where no group underachieves and most achieve better than expected. There is no evidence of discrimination and all students are encouraged to develop their interests and talents to the full.

The school is a cohesive community in which there are good levels of tolerance and understanding between students from different backgrounds and cultures. Students have a well-developed understanding of different groups within the local community and they come in regular contact with more elderly people, young people and the general public. The curriculum provides good opportunities to develop an understanding of global communities and cultures with a link to a South African community being one example. The school recognises that there is more to do to develop students' wider understanding of the breadth of cultures within modern day United Kingdom society.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students start their courses with GCSE results considerably lower than most students' starting points. Recruitment to the sixth form and the rates of completion of courses is good. For the last two years all students at the end of Year 13 have entered higher education, further education or employment. Students are very positive about their experiences in the sixth form which is confirmed in their good attendance. They make a very good contribution to the school community, for example, through spearheading charity fund-raising activities, helping younger students with their reading and supporting learning in lessons. They develop independent learning skills with the support of the school's good ICT facilities, although the school's arrangements for assuring students make best use of their non-lesson time are not robust. Consequently, students do not always make full use of the study time and

facilities available to them. There are good outcomes across a range of measures with most students reaching the targets set for them. Students' good progress is the result of good teaching and a carefully planned and organised range of curriculum opportunities that allows students to access courses that match their needs well. Leadership and management are good, especially in tracking students' progress and providing additional support.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Around 15% of parents returned questionnaires. The large majority of these parents are supportive of the school and consider their children enjoy school. They are especially appreciative of the holistic approach the school takes to individual care and support for their children. The vast majority consider that the school keeps their children safe, that it is well managed and appreciate the way their children are well prepared for their futures. Inspectors agree with most of these views. They consider that students are prepared well for their futures in many ways, but while they are developing greater confidence in applying their basic skills they judge that they are prepared satisfactorily. A very small number of parents expressed concerns relating to the management of behaviour, homework and communications with parents. Inspectors are satisfied that the school has very effective systems in place through the pastoral system to manage behaviour and to communicate with parents. The school recognises that the system of using 'student post' may not always be effective. Homework is monitored by the school and the development of ICT systems to support independent learning is leading to greater consistency in its use.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Oldershaw School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 98 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 851 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	33	61	62	5	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	27	68	69	3	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	44	45	48	49	6	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	38	50	51	9	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	36	55	56	8	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	24	61	62	11	11	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	16	65	66	9	9	2	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	24	24	65	66	5	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	30	61	62	5	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	29	56	57	9	9	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	18	69	70	6	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	38	39	55	56	4	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	47	46	47	5	5	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils'needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



04 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Oldershaw School, Wallasey, CH45 4RJ

Many thanks for welcoming the inspection team to your school. We enjoyed meeting and talking to many of you about your school. Thank you to those of you who completed the questionnaires and please pass on our thanks to your parents or carers who returned their questionnaires.

Oldershaw is a good school that takes exceptionally good care of you. Staff go that extra mile to ensure that you are happy and secure in school and able to succeed. The school has developed an outstanding range of courses for you to make sure that you are interested in learning and can see a way forward into further education and training. They have looked carefully at what opportunities for work and employment there are in the locality and made sure that they work exceptionally well with other institutions locally to give you every opportunity to follow a course that suits you. Your school recognises that you have a great deal to offer, both in terms of ideas of how to improve the school and of how you can support different groups in your local community. The number of you involved in leading activities in primary schools, fund-raising activities or sports and art activities is commendable.

You are making good progress and achieving well especially in business, enterprise and ICT related courses. Your standards in mathematics are not as good as in other subjects and, consequently, your school is providing you with some very good support to help you to do even better. However, in order to help you gain even better results, especially in mathematics, we have asked the school to find ways to share best practice in teaching and eliminate inconsistencies so that :

- in every lesson all of you are challenged fully
- more lessons engage you actively in learning
- all marking makes the next steps in learning clear to you
- there are consistently high expectations of the presentation of written work.

We hope that you carry on enjoying school and that you continue to work and study hard so that you can enjoy a successful future.

Yours sincerely
Mrs Gillian Salter-Smith
Lead inspector

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