

Foxwood School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Unique reference number | 119057 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 379716 |
| Inspection dates | 7–8 March 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Mike Kell |

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

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| Age range of pupils | 2–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 119 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 14 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Yvonne Parry |
| Headteacher | Neil Birch |
| Date of previous school inspection | 9–10 December 2008 |
| School address | Seabrook Road Hythe CT21 5QJ |
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| | |
|---------------------------|----------------|
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Introduction

Inspection team

Mike Kell

Additional inspector

Lily Evans

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent in excess of seven hours observing 14 lessons in addition to spending shorter periods of time in classes. They observed fourteen different teachers and pupils covering the whole age range were seen. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body and a range of school leaders, and held conversations with pupils in classes. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a variety of school documentation including behaviour tracking and recording sheets, leaders' records of classroom monitoring and development planning. The 51 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were analysed, as were the 78 completed by staff and the 40 from pupils.

Information about the school

Foxwood is a slightly larger than average special school, with specialist status for cognition and learning. All of the pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Approximately half have an autistic spectrum condition and the remainder have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. A very large majority of pupils have a White British heritage, and around two thirds are boys. A few pupils are children in care, and approximately a quarter are known to be eligible for free school meals.

The school has undergone significant change since the previous inspection, when it had just formed a hard federation with another special school. An executive headteacher took up post in April 2010, followed by other changes in the leadership of the school, including the promotion of the deputy headteacher to head of education. The school's residential provision was closed in December 2009; that accommodation is now used for teaching post-16 students, who were relocated onto the main school site in early 2010. Previously, some had been taught on a site several miles away, while others were based at a local college. The primary care trust runs a children's centre on the school site and Early Years Foundation Stage children with the most complex needs are taught by Foxwood staff in that building.

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 | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 3 |

Key findings

- Foxwood is a satisfactory school, but one where the strengthening of leadership and management has shown the school's ability to move forward rapidly. The Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 provide good quality education. Post-16 provision is satisfactory, but its curriculum lacks breadth and relevance. The school takes very good care of pupils. It is not a good school because of remaining weaknesses in teaching, the curriculum and in middle management.
- Pupils achieve satisfactorily when compared with others of similar age and starting points nationally, although many make good progress in developing communication skills. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 achieve well. Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and achieve well in aspects of personal development such as social awareness and independence.
- Despite pockets of good and outstanding practice, teaching is satisfactory overall. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is consistently good. Not all teachers plan consistently to accelerate every pupil's progress through tailored activities and resources that extend their learning. Furthermore, time is often spent on whole-class teaching sessions rather than group or individual work that challenges the most able.
- Pupils behave well. Their attendance is high and they arrive at classes punctually, settle quickly and follow routines without fuss. Their attitudes are positive and they relate well to classmates and adults. Pupils are safe, with no incidents of bullying or other harassment.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders dealt with inherited difficulties very effectively and have established the federated school's identity. Leaders maintain a tight focus on improving performance and raising the quality of teaching, but their expectations are not yet fully embedded in practice and middle leaders are not fulfilling completely the responsibilities now expected of them.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Increase the pace at which pupils learn by developing consistent practice across the school, ensuring that:
 - teachers routinely make effective use of pupils' prior achievement when planning future learning activities
 - planning focuses more precisely on what teachers expect individuals or small groups of identified pupils to learn, and that all groups have the resources needed to meet their learning styles and capabilities
 - teachers develop a better balance between the time pupils spend on whole-class work and that devoted to small group work so that higher attaining pupils have more opportunities for challenging independent work.
- Improve the breadth and relevance of the curriculum in the post-16 provision by:
 - developing a more effective work-related learning programme and a greater variety of accredited courses
 - introducing personal learning pathways for students so that individuals' needs can be better met
 - focusing more on the promotion of functional literacy and numeracy skills and self-help skills for independent living.
- Develop further the influence of middle leaders in disseminating best classroom practice through observations, modelling, coaching and mentoring.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

A very large majority of parents and carers believe that their children make good progress, but this was not confirmed during the inspection. While it is true for the youngest age groups, there is a mixed picture of learning and achievement elsewhere. Consequently achievement is satisfactory overall. There is no significant difference in the achievement of pupils with different types of special educational needs or disability, or in the progress made by different groups, such as those who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after children. Boys and girls progress at broadly the same rate. Pupils achieve well in many aspects of their personal development, such as growing social awareness, acceptance of change and the consequences of their actions.

Attainment remains low because of the severity of pupils' special educational needs. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 get off to a good start because they receive high levels of support and engage in activities that are carefully planned to meet their needs. Consequently, they make good progress in developing language and receptive and expressive communication skills, including speaking and listening in some cases. They make similarly good progress in developing early number awareness and in their personal and social development. Good progress in all of these areas was evident in a science lesson planned around Jack and the Beanstalk. A variety of communication strategies supported by text

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enabled all children to participate fully in choosing foods to taste, counting out seeds and then planting them. Children with more complex needs in a music session achieved similarly well because the activities were stimulating and so they experienced success in moving their bodies and tracking bubbles visually, which they communicated to adults.

There is variation in the rate at which pupils subsequently make progress as they move through the school. A minority continue to learn at a good rate, and a few develop their reading skills well, while other, non-verbal, pupils develop expertise in their use of electronic communication aids. Pupils generally, however, make satisfactory progress in acquiring key skills because of inconsistencies in teaching and weaknesses in the post-16 curriculum. Variations in achievement were apparent in the lessons observed. Post-16 students with profound and complex needs developed their communication skills well and showed an awareness of music because of staff's skill in reacting to students' responses. Less progress was made in other lessons, such as when pupils did not develop an awareness of chronology as much as they could have done because of a lack of creativity in devising ways to stimulate their senses and imagination when considering the past and the present.

Consequently, by the end of Years 6, 9 and 11, achievement is satisfactory within the national context when the progress is compared with that made by pupils of the same age and starting points in schools elsewhere. Post-16 students' achievement is also satisfactory, which in part is due to an unimaginative curriculum.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is typically satisfactory, which does not align with the views of a very large majority of parents and carers and most pupils, who believe that it is good. It is consistently good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and there are pockets of good and outstanding practice throughout the school. In addition, features of good practice are common to all lessons, such as very good relationships, an appropriate use of praise and the establishment of routines. Adults' adherence to routines and their expectation that pupils develop understanding of how their actions affect others positively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff use different communication strategies, including a good variety of electronic communication aids, very effectively.

Adults in all classes record pupils' ongoing progress against individual targets efficiently, and those working with pupils with the most profound difficulties are especially skilled at recognising small indications of learning, such as eye movements. In the most effective lessons, staff change or extend activities in response to this, although such effective practice is not routine. Teachers have developed good long- and medium-term curriculum plans, but short-term planning is variable as it does not routinely reflect these curriculum plans sufficiently sharply by focusing on individual needs. Consequently, the school does not fully exploit its specialist status. Teaching is most effective when planning details precisely what individuals or groups are expected to learn and activities build on individuals'

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previous achievements. Tailored resources are available and teaching assistants are briefed about how to encourage independent learning. Pupils learn quickly when these features are combined with high expectations, an efficient use of time and good classroom management. Importantly, on these occasions teachers maintain a good balance between whole-class activities, and the advantages for social interactions that they bring, and small group or individual work, because it is then that learning gains momentum.

Learning is less rapid when teachers keep pupils together for too long as a whole class before moving into group work, such as in a lesson about festivals associated with different faiths. This approach does not acknowledge pupils' wide range of attainment as they spend time not engaged directly in learning as teachers strive to include all pupils, which is to the detriment of higher attaining pupils particularly. These situations generally occur when teachers do not plan in sufficient detail what new knowledge and understanding they anticipate each pupil will acquire.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Attendance is high despite the negative impact on data caused by some pupils' prolonged absences because of medical conditions. Behaviour is good, which confirms the view of a very large majority of parents and carers, most staff and a large majority of pupils. There is evidence of growing maturity and self-management of behaviours as pupils get older and move through the school. Such improvements are made possible by the school's careful approach to recording, tracking and analysing all recorded incidents of unacceptable behaviour. This information is used very well to produce individual care, health and learning plans and environment support plans and programmes that are monitored, reviewed and updated. These records confirm the good quality of behaviour over time. There are no recorded instances of bullying or harassment of any kind and there has not been cause for the school to exclude any pupil since the previous inspection.

Similarly high proportions of parents and carers, staff and pupils also believe that the school provides a safe environment, and the inspection team confirms that belief. Pupils' welfare is at the forefront of the school's work; pupils are treated respectfully and they receive a high standard of care. Very effective links with partners, such as medical services, contribute greatly to pupils' safety and continuing good health. Impressive examples of pupils beginning to take responsibility for their own safety and wellbeing were seen during the inspection. A young child was a very active partner in making the decision about how much liquid she wanted in her gastric drink and she knew how to release the drink herself. A post-16 student with very complex needs could initiate picking up his spoon when previously he had not been able to make any indication that he was ready to eat.

Leadership and management

The new governing body and recently appointed executive headteacher faced a number of challenges in early 2010. They had to deal with a deficit budget and

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devise a recovery plan, reduce the number of staff and make provision for post-16 students who had been relocated. They dealt with these pressing needs very well. They have also used links within the federation and beyond well to widen pupils' learning experiences over time. Consequently pupils have been able to consolidate their skills and knowledge through a wider range of learning experiences in other schools, both special and mainstream. These links also illustrate the school's effective work in the community element of its specialist status role, carried out by the federation's outreach provision, the integrated specialist inclusion service (ISIS).

The executive headteacher was also able to address successfully the need to improve links with parents and carers, a key issue from the last inspection, through the appointment of a family liaison officer. Rigorous self-evaluation has led to a good understanding of priorities, as shown in the school's development plan. The new senior leadership team focuses on raising the quality of education. Its use of robust lesson observations, secure performance management arrangements and a very well-considered training and professional development programme has had some notable success. This includes improving some aspects of teaching and learning through bringing in and disseminating the principles of good mainstream practice.. Inconsistencies remain, with middle leaders yet to have an impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning. However, the school has demonstrated that it does have the capacity to improve further.

Close working between the governing body and school leaders has also ensured that safeguarding and child protection procedures meet all requirements and that all pupils are treated fairly and are able to work without fear and free of discrimination or harassment.

The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced, except in the sixth form where the range of courses provided is too narrow and there is insufficient emphasis on individual needs and the development of key skills. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. In school, pupils have planned opportunities to work collaboratively on occasions, such as when pupils dissected seeds in pairs, or in moments of quiet reflection in subjects like music. The enriched curriculum provided through the school's strong links with partners gives pupils the opportunity to learn from their mainstream peers and to practise in other situations what they have learned in the classroom.

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

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 46 | 46 | 8 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 8 | 47 | 40 | 5 |
| Secondary schools | 14 | 38 | 40 | 8 |
| Special schools | 28 | 48 | 20 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 15 | 50 | 29 | 5 |
| All schools | 11 | 46 | 38 | 6 |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Attendance | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance. |
| Behaviour | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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: | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. |
| 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. |
| Safety | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning. |

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.



9 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Foxwood School, Hythe CT21 5QJ

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school and for being so friendly to us. We enjoyed the days that we spent with you. You told us that you like going to school and we saw many happy faces while we were with you. We were very impressed with how often you go to school and how well you behave. You always do what adults ask of you and you get on very well with your friends. The school takes very good care of you and you told us that you feel safe.

The school provides you with a satisfactory education. Most of your lessons are taught satisfactorily, although some are really good, which means that while most of you make satisfactory progress in your work, some of you learn quickly. You do very well in learning how to communicate in many different ways.

The people who run your school have made lots of very useful changes and they have many ideas about how they can make the school better. We have asked them to do some things as well.

- Check that every one of you learns as much as you possibly can in every lesson.
- Give post-16 students more interesting things to do to help with their learning.
- Make sure that all of the staff know exactly what their jobs are.

You can help them to make these improvements by carrying on going to school as often as you can, and by continuing to work so hard and behaving so well. An inspector may visit you soon to see how you are getting on.

Finally, thank you once again for welcoming us into your school and I wish each of you every success in the future, especially if you are leaving school this year.

Yours sincerely

Mike Kell
Lead inspector

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