

The Forge Secondary Short Stay School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	136161
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	382035
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Alan Dobbins

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Phil Spurr
Headteacher	Roger Satterthwaite
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed, in part or in full, eight lessons from the 10 classroom teachers. They held meetings with the chairperson of the management committee, staff, groups of students and the local authority manager for short stay schools. Inspectors looked at policies and reviewed documents and the data the school has on students' progress. They scrutinised six parental questionnaires and spoke with five parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How good is the progress students make in their learning and in dealing with their other difficulties?
- Are students learning what is right for them?
- How clear is the local authority's remit for the school and how effective are senior leaders in developing the school to meet in full their responsibilities under the remit?

Information about the school

The Forge is a new short stay school that opened on 1 September 2010. It is an amalgamation of two pupil referral units, one for Key Stage 3 and the other for Key Stage 4 students. The new school is located on the same site as the two units. It provides specialist provision for students who have been permanently excluded or are at risk of exclusion from 28 client secondary schools in the north-east area of Worcestershire. Students are referred to The Forge through the Fair Access Panel. There are more boys than girls. The majority of students are of White British heritage. More students than is typical are known to be eligible for free school meals. The headteacher joined the school when it opened. The school has three main priorities: to return students who spend six weeks at the school to their mainstream schools; to provide students with an alternative curriculum through the New Chances programme; and to prepare the Year 10 and Year 11 students who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools for the next stage of their education and life thereafter.

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?

3

The school’s capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The Forge is a satisfactory school that is improving. Headteachers of the client schools say The Forge is becoming increasingly effective in dealing with the needs and difficulties of their students, so that when they return to their mainstream schools they are better placed to be successful in their learning. The small number of parents and carers that inspectors spoke with say that The Forge is very good at helping their children take greater control of their behaviour and emotions so that they can commit themselves to, and even enjoy, learning again.

There is much that is already good at The Forge. It is a safe and welcoming place that is generally calm and well ordered. Students gain good advice from staff and from those in specialist agencies in dealing with their difficulties. In this, some students are helped by the good partnerships that are already in place with their parents and carers. The headteacher and senior leaders have worked hard and well at setting expectations and embedding the procedures aimed at securing good practice. As a result, teaching is improving and the curriculum is developing to match the needs and interests of each student. Behaviour and attendance steadily improve over the time students spend at the school. Most make sufficient gains to return successfully to their mainstream schools or anticipate success when continuing their education at colleges or with training providers.

The great majority of students like what is on offer for them at The Forge. Students like the progress they are making and most often go purposefully about their business. They develop good relationships with staff as they learn to trust and respect them. Students say staff ‘understand them’ and help them ‘learn more than in their other schools’. Their understanding of right and wrong improves, although they do not always make the right choices, especially when these have to do with staying safe and keeping healthy. One parent, recognising the school’s positive impact on her son’s learning and values, declared that The Forge was ‘fantastic’ and wished her son could stay there ‘for ever’. Most students attend well enough to gain full advantage from the school but a small minority do not and these gain very little from the school.

The school’s demonstrates its good capacity for sustaining improvement. The senior leaders know, through their analysis of the impact of the school’s work so far, that more needs to be done. The headteacher has rightly concentrated on developing and operating the procedures required for the school to be a place that benefits students. This has been done well. Nevertheless, the systems for assessing the gains students

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are making at the school are in the early stages of development. This means that it difficult for senior leaders to recognise precisely the impact of their initiatives. At this time, there is no precise frame of reference for judging the work of the school, although the local authority is well on the way to producing a detailed remit for the role of the school within the overall secondary aged provision for the region. As a result, the management committee is unable to fully meet its responsibility for judging the effectiveness of the school until this becomes available.

Up to 40% of the 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?

- The local authority should complete the remit for the role of the school, including identifying the key indicators that the management committee can use in evaluating the school's effectiveness.
- Make better use of assessment information for judging:
 - students' progress against their targets for learning
 - the quality of the work of the school.
- Work rigorously and creatively to increase the attendance of students who are regularly absent.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Typically, students join the school with levels of learning below those expected for their age. Generally, students make satisfactory progress. The poorest attenders, however, make too little progress in their learning and in dealing with their difficulties. The small class sizes, the bright, spacious and well-resourced classrooms including the good relationships, students have with their teachers and teaching assistants, help make many lessons purposeful and friendly events. In the lessons where students are learning what is right for them progress is good. For example, in a lesson in mathematics the most capable student worked on algebraic equations while the others worked on place values to a million. Each student found their tasks appropriately challenging, these being neither too hard nor too easy. They worked hard to do their best, behaved very well and completed their tasks with pride. At the end of the lesson, one said that he had forgotten that 'learning could be fun'. Students especially gain from being active in their learning. In a food technology lesson, students made damson jam so that they could compare it with store-bought jam. They listened well, worked hard, used equipment correctly, paid regard to hygiene considerations and were genuinely proud of what they were doing. They talked animatedly of the nutritional differences between the two jams and predicted that their jam, made from fresh ingredients, would 'taste miles better'. In the less

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successful lessons, the tasks provided do not match well enough with students’ learning needs. When this is, the case teachers and their assistants spend too much time dealing with inappropriate behaviour. They do this well, but it is at the expense of time spent on learning and progress is therefore slower.

The small number of students at the school means that their opinions and thoughts are easily known to staff. Nevertheless, they are encouraged to have a say in the running of the school. For example, students helped in choosing the name for the school. The student panel routinely meets candidates hoping to work at the school. Currently, students are contributing to designing the school’s web site and they have made the video that shows the Eco work they carried out in the school’s garden. Awareness of wider national and international communities is mostly gained through supporting charities and the Christmas Boxes appeal. The good progress students make in developing their self-confidence and self-esteem, allied with the trust and respect they gain for staff, helps many refocus their perspective on what they think and do. As a result, they see more clearly the importance of spiritual issues in their lives, such as values, belief and friendship.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other 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	3

How effective is the provision?

The school’s programme for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning is requiring teachers to plan carefully to ensure that lessons are right for each student, ensuring tasks set have the right degree of difficulty. The increase in the number of good and outstanding lessons being taught over the three terms since the school’s

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

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opening is solid evidence of the effectiveness of this programme. Teachers’ planning is helped by the Fair Access Panel requiring that each student’s home school provide The Forge with detailed information on their capabilities and needs prior to them entering the school. The result of this is that, minimal time is spent having to find out what students know and can do, therefore purposeful teaching and learning occurs from the first day at the school.

The focus of the curriculum is on personal, social and health education and the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education. Providing vocational courses for the older students through college placements and training providers, for example in hairdressing, motor mechanics and building construction, complements the GCSE examination opportunities that are also available. The aim is for the curriculum to be flexible enough to meet the wide-ranging needs of all students. Subject leaders are developing a coherent package of long-, medium- and short-term plans. Such plans are becoming more effective in providing bespoke learning programmes according to students’ capabilities and interests, including arranging for work experience placements. One aspect of the curriculum that is already well developed: the transition arrangements for supporting those who return to their mainstream schools, or to another mainstream school, are good and make an important contribution to the high rate of successful returns.

The wide range of specialist support that, when required, is speedily accessed helps students deal well with their issues and difficulties. They especially value the support of the school’s nurse on matters to do with good health. The procedures for improving behaviour work well. Students are know and understand their targets and what it is they have to do to achieve them. The good effort made by staff to involve parents and carers in supporting their children provides additional support for a minority of students. Many ways have been explored for improving the attendance of those who are persistently or regularly absent. However, more thought is required as to how the small minority of poor attenders can be supported to attend school on a more regular basis.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has led a solid start. He and the senior leaders have worked hard and effectively in setting standards, and in developing and embedding procedures.

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These ensure that the school is a meaningful extension to the provision available for students who find it difficult to meet the routines and expectations of their mainstream schools. Some initiatives are already working well: teaching is improving; through its increasing flexibility, the curriculum is matching better with the needs and capabilities of students; and they are becoming better at gaining greater control of their behaviour and emotions because of the good procedures to help them. Other procedures are just beginning to work. For example, the performance management programmes for teachers that link staff development opportunities to the school’s priorities. Some other procedures are at an early stage of development, most notably those that provide assessment information for judging the quality of the progress students make over their time at the school. All students have equal access to what is best for them. The clear directions gained through the Fair Access Panel on what the school should focus on for each student and the flexibility built into the school’s overall curriculum effectively means that each student is able to work on what is most relevant to their needs.

Safeguarding procedures are thorough. Risk assessments are rigorous and regularly checked, staff are trained to a high level and the building is secure. Due regard has been paid to community cohesion. Already, there are good contacts with the local community, for example, through taking part in the project to paint the local underpasses, by creating a tapestry to show at Worcester Cathedral and as members of the Partners in the Community Together project. All the parents and carers who spoke with an inspector are grateful for the support and advice they gain from staff in helping them deal with the difficulties their children have in their lives. Through the work of the Fair Access Panel, the links with the client schools are already strong, and are getting stronger as the impact of improving provision is seen through the successes of students when they return to their other schools.

Establishing The Forge as effective provision within the short time period of its history is a creditable achievement. This is especially so as the management committee and the headteacher have not had the benefit of knowing in precise detail the local authority’s remit for the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Very few parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Given this, the statistical outcomes of the table on the next page should be treated with caution. Five parents and carers spoke to inspectors. They were fulsome in their praise for the work of the school and the support and advice offered by the headteacher and his staff to their children and to themselves. One mother said: 'This school is brilliant. I do not dare think where my son would be without it.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Forge Secondary Short Stay 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 six completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 36 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	3	50	2	33	0	0	1	17
The school keeps my child safe	4	67	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	5	83	1	17	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	4	67	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
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)	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	5	83	1	17	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	67	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	5	83	1	17	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	4	67	2	33	0	0	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



14 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Forge Secondary Short Stay School, Redditch, B98 8HF

It was a pleasure for us to meet and spend time with you when we visited your school. Thank you for making us so welcome. We found your school to be a satisfactory school, but one that is improving. These are some of the things we especially liked.

- You feel safe at school and almost all of you are pleased to be there.
- The progress you make in dealing with your difficulties, so that when you return to your other schools, or go on to the next stage of your education, you have a much better chance of being successful at your learning.
- The way you work hard to improve your behaviour and take greater control of your emotions.
- The ways in which your headteacher and the staff have worked hard to make sure that, even in its first year, The Forge provides you with learning experiences that are effective and right for you.

There are three things that we would like to see developed. First and foremost, we want the local authority to make clear its aims for the school. These can then be used by the management committee to help judge how well the school is doing. Second, we want your senior leaders to develop assessment procedures to recognise the progress you make while at The Forge. This will show how hard you have worked and how good the staff are in helping you in your learning and in dealing with your other difficulties. Third, we want those of you who do not attend regularly to improve your attendance so that you can gain full benefit from the school. To help in this we have asked your senior leaders to think of ways to help secure the regular attendance of all of you.

You can help by, for example, always focusing on your learning as fully as you can, and by taking advantage of all the ways in which the school helps to prepare you for return to your other schools, or to the next stage of your education.

Yours sincerely

Alan Dobbins
Lead inspector

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