

Forest School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110061
Local Authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	378044
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Daniel Burton HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	1150
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bill Crawford
Headteacher	Keith Quine
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 March 2009
School address	Robin Hood Lane Winnersh Wokingham RG41 5NE
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 46 lessons, taught by 44 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, groups of students and governors. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at policies, data and the school's own analysis, including its self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings, and 200 questionnaires completed by parents and carers. They also looked at questionnaires completed by staff and students.

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

- Students' achievement and attainment in science.
- Outcomes, including academic achievement, for students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Achievement in English for all students and achievement in mathematics for lower-attaining students.
- The effectiveness of the school's work to build on good practice to reduce the proportion of satisfactory lessons.
- The impact of middle leaders in securing high quality teaching and good achievement across the curriculum.

Information about the school

Forest School is a large comprehensive school for boys, with an average-sized and growing sixth form. Most students are White British, although a small but increasing minority of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language has risen since the last inspection but remains below average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average and the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The range of needs includes specific learning difficulties, speech language and communication needs, autistic spectrum disorder and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school is a specialist Business and Enterprise College.

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

Forest School is a good school and is well placed to improve further. Leaders and managers, led by the highly effective headteacher, have built skilfully on the school's strengths while addressing, with increased effectiveness, the areas in need of most improvement. As a result of improvements since the previous inspection, several aspects of the school's work are now outstanding.

Excellent provision for care, guidance and support ensures that students feel extremely safe in school. Students are known as individuals and the support provided for students facing more challenging circumstances is exemplary. Students benefit from an excellent curriculum which is very well matched to their needs and aspirations. The school's business and enterprise specialism has a very high profile within the school, is deeply valued by students and makes a significant contribution to ensuring their future economic well-being. An extensive programme of business and enterprise education is complemented by excellent opportunities to engage with local employers. These outstanding aspects of provision have helped to secure improved outcomes for students since the previous inspection. Students' commitment to healthy lifestyles and their contribution to the school and wider community are both outstanding.

Leaders and managers recognise that these improvements now need to be matched by teaching of the very highest quality to ensure that all groups of learners make outstanding progress and that the remaining unevenness in attainment between different subjects is fully addressed.

While attainment in English is above the national average, it does not match the high attainment seen in mathematics. Strategies to strengthen leadership and management arrangements in English are proving effective, but have not had time to have sufficient impact on results at GCSE. Nevertheless, significant improvements in A level attainment and achievement in English demonstrate that the department has good capacity to address previous underachievement.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of a well-tailored curriculum, together with excellent one-to-one support and generally good teaching. However, occasionally in lessons, for example in mathematics, the progress of these students is only satisfactory. This is because not all teachers plan equally effectively to address students' specific barriers to learning. In some lessons, planning does not make the most of the expertise provided by the

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well-qualified team of learning support assistants.

Teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection, with the large majority of lessons securing good progress. However, teachers' use of assessment is inconsistent. This means that teaching is not responsive enough to the differing levels of prior attainment of the whole group, including the most able. In some lessons, the pace of learning is too slow.

Staff are united in their determination to secure constant improvement and morale is high. Of the 74 staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, 97% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'I am proud to be a member of staff at this school.' Effective action planning is supported by rigorous self-evaluation and ensures that the school has good capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in English so that by the end of Key Stage 4, attainment in GCSE English is more closely aligned with the high attainment seen in mathematics.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching so that by July 2012, 85% of lessons secure good or outstanding progress, by
 - strengthening teachers' use of assessment to ensure that all lessons are challenging, well paced and fully matched to students' capabilities
 - ensuring that teachers' planning always identifies, precisely, how teaching will fully meet the needs of the whole group, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and that lessons maximise the impact of additional adult support.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students report that they feel very safe in school. From the sample Ofsted questionnaires, 99% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'I feel safe when I am at school'. Meetings with students during the inspection confirmed these findings. As one student said, 'Bullying is not tolerated.' Students in Year 7 who have only recently joined the school reported that they feel very safe.

Students' commitment to healthy lifestyles is outstanding and reflected in the very high take-up of extra-curricular sports. The school combines a track record of success in national competitions with an inclusive approach, which means that all can take part, regardless of their ability. All groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to be eligible for free school meals, are well represented in the school's extensive extra-curricular programme.

Students' conduct in lessons and around the school is good and often outstanding. They are courteous and highly motivated to do their best.

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Students work hard in lessons and respond particularly well when learning is challenging, varied and well paced. In one GCSE geography lesson seen, the most able students responded enthusiastically to the chance to work from an A-level text book. Students’ work is usually of high quality and this helps explain why attainment is above average overall and high in a number of subjects, including in geography, mathematics and business studies. Students taking separate sciences also attain very well, though not enough middle-attaining students secure good qualifications in two sciences.

Students from a wide range of groups make good progress. Staff are increasingly aware of the varying needs of different students, although teaching does not always ensure that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully met. Nevertheless, the excellent support these students receive through mentoring and specific learning support ensures that their progress, while less consistent in some lessons than for other groups, is good overall. There are some striking examples of the effectiveness of specialist support in securing very good outcomes for some students with complex needs. Progress for students known to be eligible for free school meals is not as consistent as it is for other students.

When teaching is less effective, students make only satisfactory progress, because learning activities are not sufficiently engaging, challenging and well paced. On occasions, in these lessons, some students lose focus, with the result that the pace of learning slows further.

Students are very well served by the school’s business and enterprise specialism and, as a result, preparation for future economic well-being is excellent. Above-average attainment and good provision for cross-curricular numeracy and literacy are complemented by high attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) and excellent opportunities to develop business experience through strong links with the local business community.

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	2
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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1

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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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching benefits from teachers' excellent subject knowledge and their ability to cultivate extremely positive relationships with students. Teachers are excellent role models and are skilful in creating a 'can-do' culture and inspiring students to do their best. As one parent commented, 'They know how to motivate boys'. Good use is made of new technologies to enhance learning, for example in history and geography. When teaching is less effective, teachers are not sufficiently mindful of students' differing levels of prior attainment. In a few lessons, overly long teacher explanations and teacher-led question and answer sessions slow the pace of learning and fail to exploit the willingness of all students to be actively involved.

The excellent curriculum meets the needs of all groups of students very well. Provision for academic study is matched by excellent opportunities for vocational study in the main school, through outstanding partnership arrangements with other providers and with local businesses. As a result, the needs of the small proportion of students who prefer more practical approaches to learning are very well served. In 2011, all students who left the school at the end of Year 11 achieved accredited qualifications. The curriculum is enriched by a very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and strong provision to promote students' welfare through personal, social and health education and additional activities, such as the Olympic legacy initiative for students in Year 8.

Outstanding provision for care, guidance and support is reflected in high levels of attendance and low levels of persistent absenteeism. The school is extremely effective in supporting students who find engaging in school life more challenging and those whose circumstances make them potentially more vulnerable. Highly effective mentoring strategies help to ensure that all students are able to make the best of the opportunities provided by the school. Inspectors met with a range of students who have needed additional support in their time at the school. All spoke extremely positively about the quality of support they had received, together with its impact on their well-being and prospects. Highly effective work to support students exhibiting challenging behaviour has resulted in a sharp drop in the number of exclusions, which is now significantly below average.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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?

Teaching benefits from innovative approaches to sharing the best practice seen. Good use has been made of the school's advanced skills teachers and other staff such as the coordinator for gifted and talented learners, together with external consultants, to strengthen teaching practice. Leaders and managers use their accurate evaluations of teaching and learning well to ensure resources are directed to achieve the greatest impact. The school is a genuine learning community and teachers respond positively to strategies designed to improve their practice.

Leaders and managers drive ambition and embed improvement well. In the staff questionnaires, 99% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'I know what we are trying to achieve as a school'.

The capacity of middle leaders to drive improvement has strengthened since the previous inspection. A combination of good appointments and more effective line management arrangements is helping to reduce variations in the quality of teaching and achievement between different subjects. Nevertheless, results in a few subjects fluctuate too much from year to year. While provision for students who speak English as an additional language is good, plans to strengthen expertise across the school are at the early stages.

The school's commitment to securing equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination is reflected in the excellent provision to support students facing challenging circumstances and the school's careful monitoring of the achievement of different groups of learners. The school has identified the need to reduce the remaining inequity in achievement between the small proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals and their peers.

The school promotes community cohesion well, particularly through links with the local business community and work with other schools. Students from all backgrounds get on well together and the school is a highly cohesive community.

Management of resources is excellent and ensures the school secures good value for money. Safeguarding arrangements are good and staff manage well the risks associated with the open nature of the school site.

Arrangements for the governance of the school are good. Governors are highly committed, well informed and play a key role in shaping the strategic direction of the school.

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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	2
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	2
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 make good progress in the sixth form, and achievement and attainment rose significantly at A level in 2011, with an increased proportion of students attaining grades A* to B. Staff have worked very effectively to address previous underachievement, for example in chemistry and business studies, with the result that progress is more consistent across the curriculum than before. Retention rates into Year 13 far exceed the national average, and attainment in a number of subjects, including English, mathematics and science, is higher than that seen nationally.

Sixth form students make a very positive contribution to the school through, for example, their support for younger students, sports coaching and their leadership of the school council. They are excellent role models.

The curriculum meets the needs of students very well. A good range of A level courses is supplemented by increasingly varied provision for vocational qualifications. More rigorous arrangements for tracking students' progress ensure that underachievement is identified much more quickly than before, with effective mentoring systems in place to support those at risk of falling behind. Nevertheless, leaders and managers recognise that systems to monitor sixth form attendance have not been tight enough. Strategies are now being developed to address this.

Good leadership of the sixth form is reflected in the good and improved outcomes for students and the reduction in variations in achievement between different subjects. As a result, the sixth form has good capacity for further improvement.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
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

Parents and carers who completed the Ofsted questionnaire are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the quality of education it provides. Many parents and carers made highly positive comments about their child’s experience at the school. Parents and carers are particularly positive about the quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school and 99% of them agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘The school keeps my child safe’.

A number of parents and carers of students who have recently joined the school were highly complimentary about the quality of the induction process. One parent, typifying the views of other respondents, commented, ‘By 7 September, my son was excited about starting at the Forest and just five days in, he is enjoying the whole experience thanks to the organisation and forward planning of all the staff.’

A few parents or carers expressed some concerns about occasional low-level disruption in lessons. Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and around the school during the inspection, held discussions with staff and students and examined behaviour records over time. They judged behaviour to be good overall and often outstanding. Nevertheless, inspectors agreed with parents and carers, and the school’s self-evaluation, that the predominantly good or outstanding behaviour is occasionally undermined by low-level disruption.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Forest 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 200 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1150 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	41	109	55	2	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	83	42	113	57	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	82	41	101	51	6	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	79	40	102	51	8	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	85	43	103	52	3	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	63	32	109	55	17	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	28	124	62	11	6	2	1
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)	64	32	117	59	4	2	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	92	46	90	45	7	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	29	111	56	15	8	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	20	119	60	9	5	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	102	51	88	44	6	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	108	54	80	40	6	3	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.



16 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Forest School, Wokingham RG41 5NE

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to inspectors when we recently visited your school. Here are our main findings though we hope that many of you will read the full inspection report.

- Your school is a good school which has continued to improve since the previous inspection.
- Many of you who spoke to inspectors told us that you are extremely well cared for by your teachers and other staff and we agree.
- Your teachers have devised a curriculum which meets your needs very well. It was good to hear so many of you tell us how much you value the opportunities which are available as a result of the school's business and enterprise specialism.
- Your personal development is excellent. As you will see from the main report, we judged a number of aspects to be outstanding, including your commitment to healthy lifestyles.

Your headteacher and his team are keen to make your school even better and we have asked them to focus on a few key areas for improvement. We have asked that they:

- raise attainment in GCSE English
- increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - all lessons are challenging, well paced and fully matched to your capabilities
 - teachers plan more effectively to meet the needs of the whole group, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Well done on maintaining your high attendance. This will undoubtedly help you to continue to do well and will help ensure you make the most of the many opportunities your school provides.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton
Her Majesty's Inspector

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