

Foxfield School

Douglas Drive, Moreton, Wirral, CH46 6BT

Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- All students start here with levels of ability much lower than most of those in mainstream schools.
- From these very low starting points the great majority make progress that is good or better in all areas of the school.
- Good progress continues throughout their time at the school because the quality of teaching is good. Teachers produce lessons that are interesting and well matched to students' needs.
- The adults skilfully communicate with the students who cannot speak and listen easily. This helps their progress in literacy and reading to be faster than expected nationally.
- Students' behaviour is good and improving rapidly. The management of behaviour by staff is getting better because of the excellent work of the behaviour management team.
- Students enjoy school and they feel very safe.
- The sixth form is good, and the wide range of courses and experiences for students aged 14 to 19 is outstanding. They gain qualifications and certificates from their studies.
- By the time they leave, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and they are very well prepared for moving on after school.
- The contribution of senior leaders and managers has greatly improved the school since the last inspection and is now good. Consequently, the quality of teaching and students' achievement has also improved and is almost always at least good and sometimes outstanding.
- The work of middle managers has also become much more effective; some features of their work are outstanding.
- The governing body provides effective support. Its members know what is going on in the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A very few lessons require improvement. This is the case when teachers do not give students enough to do or when students have to share too many activities and, as a result, waste time waiting to take turns.
- The plans for improving the school and the teachers' planning of lessons do not make it clear enough what students will learn and how their achievements will improve.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors spent around four hours in classrooms observing six lessons and making a number of short visits to classes. They watched students leave school in the afternoon and observed lunchtimes and playtimes and the arrangements for lunchtime clubs.
- Students' work and their learning records were studied. The inspectors listened to students read.
- The inspectors spoke with students during lessons and informally around the school to gain their views and opinions.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other members of the senior team, members of the middle management team including subject leaders, teachers, other workers, including the school nurse, and the Chair of the Governing Body. A telephone conversation was held with a senior manager from the local authority.
- The views of staff were noted through meeting with them and by scrutinising their returned questionnaires.
- The inspection took account of the views of parents through viewing the 12 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and by looking at the surveys previously carried out by the school with parents.
- The work of the school was observed and documents concerning self-evaluation, planning, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and students' progress were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Terry McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jane Holmes

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Foxfield admits students with a wide range of special educational needs with the majority experiencing severe learning difficulties. For some, their needs are profound and most have multiple barriers to learning including physical difficulties, autism and behavioural difficulties.
- Most students join the school at the beginning of their secondary education and continue to beyond the statutory school leaving age, but they can enrol at any time from 11 to 19. Almost half are known to be eligible for the pupil premium and this is very high compared to most schools nationally.
- There are slightly more boys than girls and the great majority come from White British backgrounds. All have a statement of special educational needs.
- Since the last inspection changes have been made to the middle management team.
- The governing body is at the very early stages of discussing with the Department for Education a possible relocation to new premises.
- Foxfield gained the Sports Mark and renewed its Investors in People status in 2010, the Arts Mark (Gold) in 2011 and an Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) award in 2012. The school helped the local authority gain the Award for Business Excellence in 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Encourage all students always to make good or better progress in lessons by:
 - making sure teachers' planning identifies exactly what they want their students to learn and not just the activities the students will complete
 - ensuring students are given enough to do in the time allocated and that they are given more work they can do for themselves, so that their time is not wasted
 - making sure that the school's plans for improvement make it clear how the intended actions will improve students' achievements.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From very low starting points students make good progress throughout their time at Foxfield. For some, progress is outstanding and this is a considerable improvement since the last inspection.
- Good progress is maintained because the good teaching constantly challenges students to do their best. Students are set learning targets that are above the levels expected by schools for students with these kinds of learning difficulties. An example of this was observed in an outstanding lesson where students with very profound difficulties were using a parachute as a sensory stimulus. Clear targets challenged each student and they were given activities that helped them to move on in their learning. Consequently, they were all highly involved in the lesson; they all contributed and demonstrated great enjoyment.
- Students make good progress in English and mathematics because adults all use the same kinds of methods when helping students, including those in the sixth form. In reading, for example, the consistent use of phonics (the sounds that letters make) helps boys and girls to learn to read well. Students apply their reading skills successfully in other areas, such as in a sixth form lesson where they were seen undertaking research using computers. In mathematics students make good progress in developing the skills they need for using numbers in everyday life.
- The good work of the school with younger students prepares them well for the later stages of education. Older students take part in exciting courses and gain qualifications. They have extended work placements and residential holidays that bring them regularly into contact with different people and communities. Thus, they make great gains in their personal and social developments.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium make good progress and evidence is emerging that, for some, their progress is improving rapidly and they are closing the gap with others.
- Where students' progress is not good it is because students are too passive, such as when they are waiting to take turns in a group. Sometimes they share activities and this wastes valuable learning time. Very occasionally, students finish their work early and have nothing more to do.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and the large majority of lessons observed during the inspection were good or outstanding. Teachers set work for students which is well matched to their needs and abilities. They use the information from students' previous lessons to set targets that are designed to move them on as quickly as possible in their learning. Students' records of previous work show that they make good progress throughout their time in the school.
- In outstanding lessons activities are very well matched to students' needs and abilities, little time is wasted and, here, students make rapid progress.
- Teachers regularly undertake training and attend professional courses in order to improve their teaching skills. For example, they now make good use of the information that shows students' progress so that they quickly spot where students might be beginning to fall behind and take steps to remedy it. This is a great improvement since the last inspection.
- Teachers gather the information about students' progress regularly and share it with school leaders so that they can identify trends and patterns in teaching and learning. Teachers also keep records of students' achievements in class. These show clearly how students have moved on in their learning and in their personal development.

- Usually, teachers provide interesting things for students to do. Teaching assistants are managed well to support learning so that lessons run briskly. Occasionally, students are required to take turns in activities and this wastes time.
- Students benefit greatly from the skilful use of technology by adults. These include using machines to help students to talk, signing, pictures to represent words and using mobility aids. Students, therefore, have every chance to join in despite their communication difficulties, low levels of sight or hearing, or problems in moving about.
- Adults skilfully attend to students' personal and medical needs so that any lost learning time is minimised. Often these jobs occur while students are engaged in lesson activities.
- Students' self-esteem is strengthened through encouraging them to take part in physical activities such as swimming and using the trampoline. These continuing small triumphs give students the confidence to join in and gain further successes.
- Where teaching requires improvement it is because students' individual needs in learning are not well met or there is too little for students to do. Occasionally, too much is done by the adults instead of the students, and the school is working on changing this.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- On occasions, the behaviour demonstrated in lessons is outstanding. Where behaviour is less than good it is because activities are led by adults too much and there is not enough for students to do.
- Improving the management of students' behaviour by staff was identified as an area for improvement through performance management. The headteacher has provided a behaviour management team for staff in order to help them develop their skills. As a result, students' behaviour is improving. This is demonstrated by the reducing number of recorded incidents. Furthermore, no students have recently been excluded.
- Following on from training of their own, staff are introducing the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL). With the new initiatives being devised by the behaviour management team in the school students learn to understand more about their feelings and emotions. Therefore, they can take some responsibility for their behaviour.
- The school takes every step to try to ensure that nobody is left out, despite the reluctance of some to join in with groups, such as those with autistic spectrum conditions.
- Many students learn to understand about right and wrong. Some develop high moral standards, helping their colleagues in class and with everyday tasks in the school. Where they can be, students are polite and welcoming to visitors.
- By the time that students move into the areas of study for the 14 to 19-year-olds, and aided by the mainly good education that they receive, most show outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This increasing maturity allows students to learn outside of the school. They begin to develop the independence that they will need when they move on to the next stages of their lives.
- Students feel safe at school and this view is supported by parents and staff. They say that bullying does not feature here and any issues that arise are dealt with swiftly by staff.
- The school ensures that students are always safe through supervising them at all times. This extends to work experience and residential holidays, when school staff trained in safeguarding, first aid and any necessary personal care are present at all times.
- Attendance is above average compared with other special schools and is helped by managers keeping students on the school site as often as possible. For example, medical appointments are conducted in the school using the specialist facilities available.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management have improved since the last inspection and, although good overall, some is now outstanding.
 - Outstanding management includes the development and use of the information systems that tell managers how well students are doing and that all are fully included in learning. Outstanding leadership is also shown by the behaviour management team who support the students and staff.
 - Good management has led to rapid improvements in the quality of teaching through using performance management effectively.
 - Good leadership has led to the numbers of physical interventions greatly reducing in the last two years, and students' above-average attendance has been maintained.
 - The team of middle managers have improved students' learning, for example, by making sure that courses for the older students provide a more exciting range of opportunities and experiences. Furthermore, middle leaders ensure that all adults involved in developing students' reading, literacy and numeracy skills use the same methods. In mathematics staff use the correct mathematical language. This was witnessed in a lesson where staff made every effort to ensure that students used the correct words, such as 'we are *adding* the banana to the milk'.
 - The headteacher's written evaluations of how the school is doing are accurate and lead to effective planning for the next steps. This shows that managers are capable of raising the quality of education even further. However, most planning fails to show the impact of new initiatives on students' achievements.
 - The local authority appropriately supports Foxfield through the range of contracts and services that the school buys into. These include aspects of the school meals service and support from the human resources department.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The good governing body clearly understands the school's strengths and weaknesses. It supports and judges the work of the managers, for example, in ensuring that the pupil premium is properly used and that all requirements for safeguarding are met. The governing body works efficiently, with members each taking on an area of responsibility that helps them to get to know the school better. Members have set appropriate performance targets for the headteacher aimed at further improving the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105131
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	400757

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	123
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Martingell
Headteacher	Andre Baird
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2009
Telephone number	0151 6778555
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Email address	headteacher@foxfield.wirral.sch.uk

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