

The Forest School

Comptons Lane, Horsham, RH13 5HW

Inspection dates 14–15 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.

- This is a vibrant and welcoming community where students are proud to belong and parents are highly supportive.
- Students achieve well, gaining better-than-average GCSE results. Their progress in English and mathematics is particularly impressive.
- Teaching is typically good and sometimes outstanding. It has improved significantly since the last inspection. Students note and appreciate the improvements over time.
- Students' behaviour is good and much improved since the last inspection. The students approach their learning with considerable enthusiasm and say they feel safe and enjoy being in school.
- The headteacher is passionate about ensuring that the Forest School is 'where boys learn best'. She has successfully driven improvement from a low base on her appointment and will settle for nothing but the best from both students and staff.
- Leaders observe teaching regularly and keep governors informed of the strengths and areas for development. There is a shared understanding of what needs to be better and staff morale is high.
- The curriculum is a major strength. It provides a wealth of opportunities for all students that are carefully matched to their abilities and aptitudes.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is some variability in the quality of teaching. Not all lessons challenge students fully and some lessons do not provide sufficient opportunities for students to develop greater independence in their learning.
- The monitoring and development of teaching are good but not always insightful enough to ensure teaching consistently promotes outstanding progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 43 lessons, around a fifth of which were joint observations with the headteacher and other leaders. Inspectors also made a number of shorter visits to lessons and classrooms.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, a representative of the local authority, with school staff, including senior staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. Informal discussions also took place with staff and students.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including students' work, the development plans, current assessment information and the ways in which it assesses how well the school is doing.
- The team considered 192 responses to the on-line (Parent View) questionnaire and other questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Lesley Farmer, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Carolyn Steer

Additional Inspector

David Lewis

Additional Inspector

Roger Fenwick

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Forest School is a single sex secondary school for boys. It is of average size.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students entitled to free school meals or looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- Relatively few students are from minority ethnic groups and few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportions of disabled students or those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action, or at action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are above average.
- A very small proportion of students attend courses at Central Sussex College.
- The school meets the current government floor standards which set minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eradicate any remaining teaching that is less than good and increase the amount of outstanding teaching, in particular by ensuring that all teachers:
 - consistently adapt tasks to match the full range of abilities in their classes so as to challenge all students fully
 - provide students with sufficient opportunities to work more actively, independently and in groups.
- Ensure that the monitoring of teaching by subject leaders is outstandingly effective in:
 - evaluating the impact of teaching on learning so as to identify aspects of teaching which need improving and provide sharply focused guidance for teachers
 - reflecting back on teachers' past targets for improvement when observing teaching and monitoring their performance to check the progress being made.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students make good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4, some from above-average starting points. As a result of skilled and effective teaching they attain high examination results at the end of Year 11. There is a consistent pattern of higher-than-average standards reached both at the top grades of A* and A, and at A* to C across almost all subjects.
- A small proportion of the most-able students are entered early for some of their GCSE subjects at the end of Year 10 in order to provide greater challenge for them in their final year. Almost without exception these students are securing the top GCSE grades and are then pursuing new courses in Year 11. The progress of these students is outstanding.
- Progress in mathematics and English has been a particular strength for some years, with results that have far exceeded the national averages. The school has worked hard to improve the proportions of students gaining the top grades in other subjects. This has paid off in 2012 with a sharp increase across many.
- Disabled students, or those who need extra help with their learning, typically make at least as much progress as other students in the school. Some make outstanding progress, given their particular level of need. This is because work is pitched for them at the right level. They are well supported and teachers pay good attention to their needs.
- There is very little difference in achievement between groups of students from all ethnic heritages and from backgrounds of differing social or economic advantage. Pupil premium funding has been used successfully to provide extra help for these students with their mathematics and their English and to enable them to participate in after-school and holiday activities. As a result, they are progressing well and reaching the same high standards as most of their peers.
- Across the school in all subjects, teachers fully exploit opportunities to develop students' skills to read, write and communicate effectively. Notably, the way in which students are able to speak confidently, articulately and precisely is a real strength.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good with examples of outstanding practice.
- Teachers have high expectations and a clear idea of what students already know. They plan interesting lessons to build on and develop this knowledge effectively. Lessons are typically purposeful and paced. As a result, students are eager to learn. Additional adults are used well to support students' learning.
- Teachers act as good role models, demonstrating high levels of respect and courtesy to students. This has resulted in good relationships between staff and students and a strong focus on learning with no time wasted.
- In an outstanding English lesson, the energy and enthusiasm in the room were infectious. Animated Year 7 students worked in groups debating the vocabulary used by Dickens in an excerpt from *A Christmas Carol*. This was then used to inform their choice of vocabulary in an individual exercise on creative writing, on which students worked independently. As a result of excellent planning and well-judged teaching on the part of the teacher, all students progressed rapidly and the learning was fun.
- Students know how well they are doing and know their target levels or grades. Their work is regularly marked and they receive helpful feedback in lessons and through the marking of their written work on how to improve. Although there is some inconsistency in the quality of marking across subjects, the school's leaders are aware and this is being targeted through the plans for improvement.
- Occasionally, tasks in lessons are not tailored closely enough to students' needs, with all expected to complete more or less similar work. These lessons do not provide enough challenge.

They offer too few opportunities for students to work independently or in groups and too much of the 'talk' comes from the teacher, so that students are not able to contribute enough. Where this happens students do not meet their potential in the lesson.

- Teamwork between teachers and additional adults is very effective in meeting the needs of disabled students or those who need extra help. Additional adults are skilled at judging the right time to offer support or when to challenge students to find solutions for themselves.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. It has improved significantly since the last inspection where pockets of misbehaviour were identified. This is largely attributable to the improvements in teaching and teachers' now consistent application of the school's behaviour policy.
- The majority of parents that responded to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View, feel that the school manages behaviour well and are pleased with the progress that their child is making. Students support this view and are proud of their school.
- The school helps students to have a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying and the different types that may occur, such as cyber or prejudice-based bullying. Students are clear that the school deals effectively with such incidents. They know exactly what to do should an incident take place, including reporting it to an adult, and they feel safe.
- Attendance levels are above average and students are notably punctual to school and to lessons. They enjoy their learning. One student commented, 'Relationships are good, but professional. Every morning all teachers are joyful and they all say good morning.'
- Students who experience problems managing their behaviour are supported extremely well to remain in school and to achieve well. Teachers are aware of their needs and tailor their teaching effectively. This is borne out by the drop in the rate of exclusions in recent years.
- Attitudes to learning are good. Students are keen learners. Their progress soars when they are given the opportunity to get involved in group or independent activities that challenge their thinking and capture their imagination and attention.

The leadership and management are good

- This is a well-led school. The headteacher is an inspirational and caring leader. She is supported by a strong leadership team and her vision has motivated staff and students to do their very best. Consequently, the school is in a good position to continue its improvement.
- Leaders tackle weaker practice through the provision of an extensive training and coaching programme. They also enable teachers to work together as 'buddies', sharing ideas on how to plan and teach more imaginative lessons. For example, last year, the English department worked alongside the science department to help them exploit opportunities to develop students' literacy through science. The success of this work was evident in science lessons observed during the inspection.
- Well-organised systems and processes are in place to enable leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's performance and set and review targets for staff. The governing body scrutinises target setting for staff as part of its performance management policy, making sure that teachers only move up the pay spine when their teaching is consistently good.
- Decisions about spending money are carefully focused on raising students' achievement. The use of pupil premium funding is closely monitored to ensure that it enables these students to secure the same high standards as their peers.
- The curriculum is very well adapted to meet students' needs and interests, including through a wide range of after-school and holiday activities. There is a strong focus on literacy and mathematics particularly for students with low levels of ability on entry who are taught together

for half of their lessons when they join in Year 7.

- The subjects provided, including the off-site vocational courses, offer a wealth of opportunities to support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students appreciate the range of choices.
 - Leaders observe lessons frequently to assess quality and identify potential areas for improvement. This monitoring has been instrumental in eradicating inadequate teaching. However, there is some variability in subject leaders' understanding of how well the approaches used by teachers improve students' learning. Senior leaders have identified this as a priority and although much good practice exists in the area of training and feedback to teachers, it is not yet resulting in consistently outstanding teaching.
 - The local authority provides effective, but limited, support because it rightly judges that the school has strong leaders who are capable of ensuring that the school continues to improve.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school well and understand why it is not yet outstanding. They provide a good balance of challenge and support. They have effectively supported the headteacher in driving improvement by supporting her strategies to address issues of behaviour and weaknesses in teaching, to good effect. They also back her in ensuring that teachers' pay is directly linked to their performance and they demand no less of her and the members of her senior team. They robustly monitor and evaluate expenditure to ensure that resources such as the pupil premium provide value for money. Systems to keep students safe meet government requirements well.
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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	126065
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	402376

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	1070
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cliff Purvis
Headteacher	Siobhan Denning
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 December 2009
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