

Fordwater School

Summersdale Road, Chichester, PO19 6PP

Inspection dates 16–17 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Teaching is typically good across the school. A small proportion is outstanding, while a similar small amount requires improvement.
- Overall, pupils achieve well in lessons and make good progress over time.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to good start, making rapid progress in some areas of learning.
- Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are outstanding. They grow into caring, friendly and good-natured young people.
- Leaders' and governors' monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice and pupils' progress have made an important contribution to raising the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The post-16 department is good. It enables students to acquire important self-help skills and prepares them well for leaving school.
- The school is a very safe place. All safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and applied routinely.
- Different agencies work very well together to support pupils and their families. Staff provide a very high level of care and welfare for pupils.
- The school is well led and managed. Ambitious senior leaders and governing body provide strong leadership. Leaders at other levels are being developed well, although senior leaders know that not all are yet wholly effective.
- Parents and carers are unanimously positive about the school and appreciate the work that it does and the support that it provides.
- The great majority of staff are enthusiastic about working in the school and know what it is trying to achieve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Lesson planning lacks detail about what individual pupils are expected to learn. This limits staff's ability to evaluate small gains in learning.
- Whole-class activities go on for too long in a few lessons. Pupils do not move on to individual or small group work quickly enough.
- Post-16 students move into different groups some of the time, but they are mostly taught in classes in which there is a wide range of attainment. This arrangement does not encourage consistent, rapid learning for the most capable as they do not benefit from spending extended periods of time with classmates of similar ability.

Information about this inspection

- Every class was visited. Almost seven hours were spent observing teaching and learning in 15 lessons, taught by 14 different members of staff. Six of the lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, members of the governing body and a local authority officer.
- Fifteen parents and carers gave their opinion of the school through the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). No parents or carers asked to meet with the inspection team.
- The views of staff were collected from the questionnaires that around half completed.
- A wide variety of documentation was examined, such as pupil assessment data, attendance records, self-evaluation procedures and development planning, and internal records of lesson observations.
- One reading session was observed, and although many pupils are non-readers, the inspection team also saw the more competent ones reading in different subjects. Pupils' use of other communication approaches was seen on a number of occasions.

Inspection team

Mike Kell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Veronica Young

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- All of the pupils are undergoing statutory assessment or already have a statement of special educational needs for severe and complex learning difficulties. Increasing numbers of pupils with autism and those with profound and multiple needs are being admitted.
- Very many post-16 students enter the school from other local special schools at the end of Year 11. Post-16 students make up almost half of the school population.
- There are only a small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- There are specialist classes for pupils with severe sensory impairment, profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with the most severe autistic conditions.
- There are slightly more boys than girls on roll.
- Approximately a third of pupils receive pupil premium funding (additional funding from the government for students looked after by the local authority, students known to be eligible for free school meals, or those with parents in the armed services).
- The school received an Inclusion Quality Mark in September 2012.
- The school makes use of local college facilities to extend the post-16 students' learning opportunities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further accelerate the rate at which pupils make progress by ensuring that teachers routinely:
 - plan precisely what they anticipate individual pupils will learn in each lesson
 - organise lessons to achieve a better balance between whole class activities and individual or small group work so that pupils spend more time on challenging activities that match their capabilities and encourage independent learning
 - Ensure that post-16 students work routinely in classes or small groups with classmates of similar ability so that collaborative work occurs far more regularly, enabling students to learn from each other.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well in lessons and make good progress over time. A substantial minority in Years 1 to 11 make extremely good progress in literacy and numeracy from their starting points when compared with pupils of the same age and attainment in other settings.
- There is no significant difference in the performance of different groups of pupils. Boys and girls are equally successful, and pupils who are entitled to pupil premium payments or who have English as an additional language do as well as others.
- Structured play and other carefully devised activities enable children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to make rapid progress in acquiring language and communication skills. In addition, they develop a growing awareness of adults and other children's presence. Less mobile children make good progress in their physical development, which means both moving around to investigate as well as handling objects.
- Primary-aged pupils build well on this good start. They make good progress in extending their communication skills, which in some cases means impressive progress in recognising letters and the sounds that they make (phonics) and putting them together in order to read. A small number achieve particularly well and are able to extract information from text.
- Pupils of secondary school age make good progress in extending their communication, literacy and language skills. For instance, Year 10 and 11 pupils were seen discussing a book they were reading and while most could recall details of the story, a few were able to draw inferences about what characters might look like.
- Post-16 students demonstrate their good achievements in many ways. They acquire nationally accredited qualifications, such as those of the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), and they also receive recognition for their participation in work experience, college courses and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.
- Pupils in the specialist classes achieve well despite having complex profound needs. This cannot always be evidenced by large measurable gains in learning but simply by pupils' ability to maintain their level of attainment in the face of medical or other obstacles to learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good. Staff in all lessons promote pupils' communication skills well, which in some cases includes reading and writing skills, by encouraging and supporting them to express their views and to interact with others at every opportunity.
- Teachers manage class teams effectively. Support staff are well briefed about their roles in supporting learning and so pupils receive good guidance, encouragement and prompting.
- Pupils' behaviour is managed efficiently and without fuss. Occasionally, an individual's behaviour may disturb others, but generally adults are skilled at defusing situations, calming pupils and helping them to re-engage with learning.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are consistently taught well. Staff have a very good understanding of the children's developmental levels and of their learning and physical needs. Therefore, they plan carefully to accelerate children's progress in all areas of learning and they record their achievements in detail.
- Some teachers' planning is detailed, but on a few occasions plans are not precise enough. At these times, planning focuses more on what teachers intend to do rather than on what they anticipate individuals will learn during the course of the lesson. This restricts staff's ability to check pupils' progress, and hence how successful the lesson has been.
- Teaching is good in the specialist classes because staff plan personalised learning programmes for pupils. In other classes, teachers do not always get the right balance between personalised or small-group learning activities and whole-class work. Some whole-class sessions go on for too

long, and yet it is in small groups that pupils learn most quickly and more independently.

- Post-16 classes are relatively large and students span a wide ability range. When staff plan and organise lessons in great detail, every student's learning is accelerated fully because their different attainment levels are reflected in the activities and resources provided. Tailored activities are at a level that challenges every student to succeed, and the most able students are extended. In a minority of cases, organisation is not so exact and so students of similar ability do not get the chance to work together and learn from each other.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Relationships are excellent throughout the school. Very high quality interactions between adults and pupils are commonplace. Pupils are very supportive of each other, for example by pushing a classmate's wheelchair.
- Pupils greatly enjoy their learning. They are happy and enthusiastic in lessons and around the school. They make very good progress in developing understanding about routines, and yet they also learn to cope with change.
- Pupils make every effort to attend school regularly, often in the face of significant difficulties. Therefore, attendance is high even though a few pupils have very extended periods of absence because of their complex medical conditions.
- Some pupils have very challenging behaviour associated with the nature of their learning difficulties. Despite this, pupils make significant gains in improving their behaviour, supported by staff's consistent application of plans that help individual pupils improve their behaviour.
- There is no bullying or discriminatory behaviour of any sort. Parents and carers are confident that their children are safe in school, and the staff fully support this view.
- Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through a skilful combination of support and challenge, staff enable pupils to improve their self-esteem, become more competent communicators and develop social confidence.
- As pupils develop growing awareness of the world around them, some learn to make informed choices based on the realisation that actions have consequences. This enables them to become more independent as well as allowing them to lead safer and healthier lives. A few mature to the extent that they travel on public transport independently.

The leadership and management are good

- Very effective senior leaders give the school a sense of purpose and direction. They are ably supported by others with leadership and management responsibilities. The local authority deems the school to need only 'light touch' monitoring.
- Robust management procedures gather accurate information about the school, which leaders use effectively to plan future developments. For instance, these procedures drew leaders' attention to the need to develop the provision for pupils with profound learning difficulties and complex medical needs.
- Many students who join the school in Year 12 have very different learning needs to Fordwater pupils who move up from Year 11, and yet the school is committed to teaching students with different abilities together for much of the time. The accommodation is barely adequate for the large number of students or their age because this also influences possible student groupings. The school has not found a wholly satisfactory answer to this dilemma. Currently, there is not the right balance between the time students spend in large mixed ability groups and that when the most able students work together and learn from each other.
- Parents and carers and staff confirm that the school is a safe place. All safeguarding procedures are in place and staff follow school policies closely.
- The curriculum meets the needs of different pupil groups well. The Early Years Foundation Stage

curriculum has a particular emphasis on language, communication and social development, while that for post-16 students focuses on preparation for leaving school. The curriculum in specialist classes is modified in ways that motivate pupils to want to participate, such as being sensory-based with tactile resources for some and very structured and regimented for those with severe autism.

- Staff from different disciplines work very well together in caring for pupils. Therapists and nursing staff make a very important contribution to pupils' performance in the classroom by ensuring that their health and physical needs are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Training has given a highly effective governing body insight into what to look for during monitoring visits into school. These visits and members' questioning of written reports ensure that governors are very knowledgeable about the school. The governing body examines pupils' progress information, including the impact of pupil premium expenditure, and it understands what the data mean in terms of pupils with special educational needs nationally. The governing body has good understanding of the quality of teaching and it maintains close oversight of the formal arrangements for monitoring teachers' performance, making sure that better pay and promotion of staff are closely related to performance in the classroom.

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	126163
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	402385

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	110
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	43
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Beryl Dyton
Headteacher	Sue Meekings
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 March 2010
Telephone number	01243 782475
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