

# Forest Oak School

Windward Way, Smith's Wood, Birmingham, B36 0UE

**Inspection dates** 12–13 February 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- The excellent leadership and management of senior staff have ensured the school's continuing outstanding effectiveness.
- Achievement has improved year-on-year and is outstanding for all groups of pupils, regardless of their backgrounds.
- The sixth form provision is good. Facilities in the school have improved considerably since the previous inspection, resulting in pupils gaining an increasingly wide range and level of vocational qualifications.
- Pupils who join the school other than at the usual times make rapid progress to quickly catch up with their peers in school.
- Teaching is outstanding and engages pupils in their learning, as it is often fun and highly relevant to the pupils.
- The subjects taught across the school are well matched to each group of pupils and, where needed, each individual to make sure that all can and do achieve their very best.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding due to consistently good and outstanding teaching, and excellent monitoring and recording of children's progress.
- Behaviour across the whole school is outstanding. Pupils' excellent relationships with each other and with staff ensure a supportive and relaxed atmosphere in which pupils' behaviour is very well managed.
- Pupils feel safe and secure in school. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and safe at all times.
- Parents, pupils and staff rightly feel that behaviour is very positive in school and that it is a safe and welcoming environment for the pupils.
- Attendance is in line with that of other similar special schools and improving.
- The governing body has a good understanding of the school and challenge and support the senior leadership team effectively.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons. In 12 of these, they were joined by the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of the senior leadership team, the Chair and two other members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at documentation regarding pupils' progress, the school's self-evaluation, school improvement information, minutes of the governing body meetings, safeguarding and child protection documents, attendance figures and examples of work in classrooms and around the school.
- Inspectors took account of the 49 responses in a recent school questionnaire to parents, as there were no responses available to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

## Inspection team

Ronald Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional Inspector

Rowena Green

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Forest Oak School is an average-sized special school for pupils between the ages of four and 18 with moderate learning difficulties. Over several years, the school has admitted pupils with a greater range of difficulties and especially pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The school has a high proportion of its pupils who enter and leave the school at times other than those usually expected.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- There is a much higher proportion of boys than girls in the school.
- Almost half the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium funding, which in this school provides extra funding to the school for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The school is part of a hard federation with another special school, with which it shares the building. The site is shared with a local high school.
- The two federated schools share the same Principal and governing body.
- Currently, there are very few children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The school has a relatively new sixth form building.
- The school uses Hill crescent Farm, Merlin Venture Ltd and Hazel Oak School's sixth form to provide extra learning opportunities for its oldest pupils.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop leadership and management further by:
  - developing the sixth form from good to outstanding through continuing to expand the subject range available
  - making sure that governors have the skills to fully analyse and understand the school information they are collecting.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding due to consistently good or better teaching. Excellent routines assist children in settling into the school quickly, and excellent relationships help to build the children's self-confidence and esteem.
- Pupils, regardless of their background and/or gender, make at least good and for many outstanding progress as they move through all the key stages in the school in both English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils making and exceeding national expectations compares very favourably with similar schools.
- The sixth form has a new, purpose-built building which has provided facilities which are appropriate to this age range. The range of subjects taught is rapidly increasing and so providing greater opportunities for pupils to gain a wider range of accreditation. Recent results for pupils in this provision have been very positive and show their good achievement. Current pupils are on track to do even better in the future, but the provision is too new to have robust information over time.
- All pupils make outstanding progress in their social, personal and physical development. This is clearly shown by the positive attitudes pupils have to the school and their learning. Pupils support each other exceptionally well and take great pride in doing the very best they can for their teachers and themselves.
- Pupils are constantly challenged to think in a variety of ways which reduces their reliance on others. For example, in an outstanding creative arts lesson pupils were discussing David Beckham and how he was perceived. The teacher challenged the pupils to create a design which symbolised their views of this celebrity. Not only were these extremely well created, but also the explanations as to why they had been created were at a very high level. One pupil had created a football on fire with pictures of Beckham's children inside it. The pupil stated: 'This symbolises David Beckham as a footballer and a family man while being, like fire, powerful and strong.'
- Pupils' skills in reading progress well across the school and reading is seen by both the pupils and all staff as a key area. During the inspection several pupils of varying ability were heard read and all did so commensurate with their abilities and ages. All showed a real love of books in general.
- Pupils have many opportunities to practise both their English and mathematical skills across a wide range of subjects, which both reinforces their learning in these areas but also makes their skills more relevant to them. For example, in a mathematics lesson related to Venn diagrams pupils were also being challenged to construct properly formulated written answers.
- The excellent links the school has with its federated school, local high school and schools provide a wide range of learning opportunities for the pupils. The high school is a sports specialist college and so pupils gain from a wide range of specialist-taught sporting activities. Other local mainstream settings provide temporary placements to help pupils prepare for possible full-time mainstream placements.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding provided by the government is used highly effectively to provide additional adult support, especially to those pupils who enter the school late in this age band. This has resulted in these pupils making excellent progress and rapidly catching up with their

peers in school.

- Due to highly focused one-to-one and small group support, and specialist teaching and resources, those pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding make accelerated progress from very low starting points. Many of these pupils enter the school with skills and knowledge at levels of between two and two-and-a-half years behind that expected of their peers at a similar age. However, by the time they leave the school they are, at most, only half a term behind their peers in school.

## **The quality of teaching** is outstanding

- Teaching across the whole school is outstanding. Teachers and other adults who support learning use excellent questioning skills to stretch and challenge pupils in all lessons. In an English lesson related to creating balanced arguments, all the adults present constantly questioned pupils as to why they felt one way or another regarding the topic under discussion. This developed the pupils' language and communication skills as well as their logical thinking skills.
- A strength of teaching in Forest Oak School is the excellent relationships between the staff and pupils. This leads to pupils always wanting to do their very best for the teachers, which in turn raises their rates of progress.
- Teachers know their pupils very well and small class sizes allow them to personalise the learning for each pupil. All adults have high expectations and this, coupled with their individual learning, supports the good and better progress pupils make across the whole school.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good, with some features that are outstanding. Teachers are expanding the range of subjects taught and providing more options for vocational qualifications such as mechanics, food hygiene, sports leadership and a number of other subjects. The local high school, local colleges and a range of commercial venues are also used to provide further learning opportunities for the pupils resulting in at least good achievement in their vocational courses.
- Pupils' skills are developed and practised across all subjects. All adults consistently develop the pupils' language and communication skills as much as they possibly can.
- The teaching of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) has improved rapidly due to extra training for staff.
- Teachers in all lessons constantly feedback to pupils on how well they are doing as the lesson progresses. They use this information to change and adapt lessons to make sure all their pupils are making the best possible progress.
- All leaders and managers closely monitor the quality of teaching and this is further secured through monitoring by external consultants and the local authority. This has led to year-on-year improvements and the Teachers' Standards being fully met.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is at least good with a large proportion that is outstanding. Teachers set up a wide range of activities and balance the proportion of child-chosen and adult-led activities effectively.

- Teachers establish excellent routines and manage pupils' behaviour expertly. This means, for example, that even the youngest pupils move from lesson to lesson with no fuss. Pupils arrive at lessons punctually and settle into their lessons quickly and sensibly. Within lessons pupils move from one part of the lesson to another smoothly and without any loss of learning time. In the Key Stage 1 swimming lessons observed, pupils quickly and sensibly changed ready for their session in the pool. At the end of the lesson, pupils got themselves dried and changed very quickly.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Across the school, behaviour in all areas is outstanding and little time is lost due to any disruption. Pupils state that behaviour is at least good and accept that one or two pupils have particular problems that they find difficult to control. Parents also feel that behaviour is excellent and say that all staff support pupils with problems very effectively.
- All adults are well trained to manage the increasing number of pupils entering the school with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and this includes training for any physical intervention that may be required.
- School information shows clearly that behavioural issues have reduced rapidly. A contributory factor is that the school is now working more closely with its partner schools and the local authority to ensure that pupils joining the school are correctly placed from the outset.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, very much like their teachers and always want to do well. They are very happy in the school, and are always very polite and considerate of each other and all adults. Pupils are very confident and this they say is down to their teachers caring so well for them.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Staff make sure that all areas are safe and well maintained, as well as ensuring that all pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. Pupils were eager to explain to inspectors how to stay safe on the internet and what they should do if they feel insecure or unsafe.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of the various types of bullying and were very clear that on the rare occasions any occurs, teachers deal with it quickly and very effectively.
- The school has had a number of exclusions over the past twelve months. These mostly involved a very few newly admitted pupils who found difficulty in settling into the school. Observations during the inspection showed that pupils have now settled very well and are clearly enjoying school. This a testament to the hard work and positive relationships fostered by all adults.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The senior leadership team has developed over several years and this consistency has led to continual improvements to the school. Self-evaluation is highly accurate and based on an excellent understanding of the school's work.
- Leaders and managers at all levels are very forward thinking for example the school's preparation for the new primary curriculum is developing well with staff being trained and all subject leaders preparing their subjects.

- The senior leadership team react quickly to resolve issues because they have an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. For example, reading was highlighted as a weaker subject within English. New initiatives, resources, staff training and, where needed, one-to-one support have been put into place and this has resulted in reading improving across the whole school.
- Leaders and managers at all levels have very high expectations for all pupils and these are shared by all staff. All staff are fully engaged in bringing about improvements within the school and this helps to secure the excellent leadership across the whole school. For example, the manager of the sixth form is developing the subject range to provide a greater range of qualifications available to older pupils.
- The monitoring of teaching is excellent and has steadily improved teaching so that it is at least good and a large proportion is outstanding. The quality of teaching is carefully linked to Teachers' Standards by the senior leadership team and governors, which in turn are used to determine teachers' pay and progression.
- The monitoring of pupils' progress is robust across the whole school. Teachers can access this information easily and use it to help plan future learning. It is also used highly effectively to make sure that if a pupil begins to fall behind then this is picked up rapidly and steps taken improve their progress.
- The pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up funding are used very effectively to make sure that all pupils make similar rates of progress and can all participate fully in the life of the school. This shows that the school has a full commitment to equal opportunities for all.
- The school utilises its close links with its local schools and wider afield to provide a wide range of learning opportunities for its pupils, as well as training and support for the staff. The school also provides excellent support to a number of local authority schools in how to support pupils with learning difficulties. These links are also used to monitor the work of the school and make sure the highest standards are maintained.
- Links with the local authority are good. Officers hold the school in high regard and provide 'light touch' support.
- Parents rightly feel that leadership and management of the school is excellent.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is good. Governors ensure they have a wide range of information about the school collected through a range of strategies. However, they do not as yet have all the skills they need to properly analyse all the information they collect. This means that for some aspects they are reliant on the senior leadership team to interpret information. All statutory duties including those related to safeguarding are met. Governors monitor the performance of staff including both teachers and teaching assistants well and link this closely to their pay and professional progression. Governors manage school finances well and track spending in relation to pupils' progress. They support and challenge the school at all levels.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	104132
<b>Local authority</b>	Solihull
<b>Inspection number</b>	440512

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	156
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	15
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brian Kendrick
<b>Principal</b>	Amanda Mordey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 September 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 717 0088
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