

Fosse Way School

Longfellow Road, Radstock, Bath, BA3 3AL

Inspection dates	8–9 July 2014		
Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
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.

- From their very low starting points, pupils make outstanding progress. Everyone leaves with appropriate qualifications, including some who gain GCSEs.
- Teaching is typically outstanding. Teachers know their pupils extremely well. They have high expectations that everyone will try their best.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour in the school, and around the classrooms helps them to learn really well. They say that they feel very safe at school.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and show their love of learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well promoted.
- There is a relentless drive from leaders and managers to make the school even better. They ensure that all pupils have the very best opportunities to do as well as possible.
- Highly effective teaching in the sixth form means that older students are remarkably well prepared for the world of work or for further education at another setting.
- Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle in to school very quickly because so much thought is put into planning activities, which prepares them well for learning.
- Governors regularly check that everyone is working well. They ensure that all resources are used to the best possible effect.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons. On eight occasions a member of the school’s leadership team joined them. Inspectors had lunch with pupils in the dining room, observed them in the playground and joined them for an assembly.
- School documents and policies were scrutinised, including information on how pupils are kept safe and how the school monitors its own progress and achievements.
- Meetings were held with the Chief Executive of the Academy Trust and with the school's Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors met groups of pupils to gain their views about the school. Minutes of governors' meetings were scrutinised.
- The views of the 18 parents and carers who responded to the online survey, Parent View, were taken into account. In addition, inspectors took account of the 61 responses to a questionnaire for members of staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work files and books and talked with them about the subjects they study. They also reviewed the information about the work of the school which is on display in classrooms and public areas.

Inspection team

Bob Pugh, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Bob Arnold	Additional Inspector
Clive Robson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school provides for pupils who have moderate or severe learning difficulties. In addition, very many have communication and language difficulties, including those with a diagnosis of autism. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school is an academy special converter. It works in close collaboration with local schools. It forms one part of a Teaching School partnership with another school. The school links with Bath Royal United Hospital to provide employment opportunities for older students.
- There have been a number of recent changes to school leadership and management, including the appointment of a new Principal.
- Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds. Just a very few pupils are from homes where English is not the first language. There are many more boys than girls at the school.
- A higher than average number of pupils receive the pupil premium, which is additional government funding made available for children who are looked after and those eligible for free school meals. All Year 7 pupils are supported by additional funding to improve their basic skills.
- Many pupils come from the school's local authority, while the remainder have long journeys to school from neighbouring towns and cities.
- The school shares its site with a residential hostel which was not part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help pupils to make even higher rates of progress by:
 - ensuring that staff encourage the more frequent use of signing and symbols to support better communication for all.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- From their very low starting points pupils make outstanding progress over time. They make rapid gains in English and mathematics. Some do so well that they are able to achieve GCSE passes. The broad range of qualifications available means that everyone leaves with passes or certificates in academic and work-related subjects, demonstrating how much they have learned.
- The vast majority of pupils make progress at a faster rate than that seen in schools for those with similar needs.
- There are no differences in rates of progress among different groups at the school. Girls achieve as much as boys and those who receive the pupil premium or other funding make strong gains in all subjects over time. As a result of highly specialist teaching, the very few pupils for whom English is not the first language at home make speedy progress in improving their communication skills.
- Everyone can be confident that the information they receive about their progress is accurate, because teachers compare their checks of pupils' work with those in other schools.
- Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage get the best possible start to school. They settle quickly to school routines and learn exceptionally well when visiting local places of interest.
- Some pupils do so well that they are able to attend mainstream schools to learn alongside their peers.
- Older students in the sixth form have made such excellent gains with communication skills that some are able to participate in the region's Young Parliament debates. Their impressive contributions to discussions on 'gender and sport for all' were described as 'amazing' by listeners.
- Pupils participate eagerly in the remarkably well-organised programmes about the world of work. Some spend time working in the school's enterprising cafe which is open to the public, while others successfully complete long-term work placements at a local hospital. As a result, all are tremendously well prepared for the next phase of their lives and learning.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Throughout the school, highly effective teaching supports the excellent progress made by pupils over time. Teachers know their pupils exceptionally well. Because of this, all learning activities are closely planned to meet the needs of every pupil.
- Teachers and their assistants are highly sensitive to the needs of individual pupils. As a result, they judge perfectly when to prompt pupils, when to allow them space and time to pursue their own interests or when to have time away from others.
- Teachers make regular checks on how much each pupil is learning by asking searching questions and shaping activities according to their responses.
- Excellent verbal feedback is offered to pupils about their work. This is followed up with thorough and rigorous marking of books with specific advice on what everyone needs to do to make even more progress. Pupils show that they understand by signing their names under the teacher's remarks. Very often, they assess their own efforts.
- On a very few occasions, there are missed opportunities for further strengthening the learning, because staff do not always use signs and symbols totally consistently.
- Teachers treat pupils with respect. An excellent example of this was seen in a swimming lesson for very young children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The teacher used questions skilfully to get pupils to think about what they needed to do, rather than issue instructions.
- Teachers use every opportunity to deepen students' understanding of the wider world. In an excellent drama session for older students in the sixth form, the teacher set up a number of scenarios which encouraged everyone to think about different opinions and lifestyles.

- Experts from different walks of life add to the strength of teaching as a result of efficient use of additional government funding. A particularly good example of this was seen in a physical education lesson. Coaches from Bath Rugby made a highly effective contribution, working outstandingly well alongside teachers to develop pupils' physical skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding.
- Pupils show excellent attitudes to learning. They settle quickly in class, lessons begin promptly and interruptions are extremely rare.
- Pupils are kind and considerate to each other. They help to look after the school site by taking great care of all equipment. Pupils are keen to discuss what they most like about the school. One student in the sixth form said that the best thing about the school was 'the staff'.
- Almost without exception, parents, carers and staff believe that everyone makes great progress in managing their own behaviour over time as a result of the very effective personal support and guidance they are given. This means that they are much more able to concentrate and do well.
- Bullying of any kind is very rarely heard of at this school. When incidents do occur, they are comprehensively followed up. Victim and perpetrator are quickly and appropriately supported.
- Staff plan carefully so that all known risks when out and about are taken into account. As a result, pupils are as safe as possible while enjoying the visit or experience.
- Arrangements for keeping pupils safe are outstanding. Pupils say that they feel very safe at school. They know who can help them if they are worried or concerned. They learn about the risks presented by the internet and social media, in classrooms and assemblies.
- Pupils' attendance has risen over time and is now above average when compared with similar schools.
- Pupils behave impeccably well when on work experience. In the school cafe they display their good manners when speaking with members of the public. The very keen attitudes of older students are greatly appreciated by those with whom they work at a local hospital.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The Principal and his senior colleagues provide outstanding leadership. They maintain an unrelenting focus on how to improve the lives of every pupil. Equality of access to all resources is central to their planning.
- Their conspicuously successful systems for assessing the school's strengths and weaknesses provide accurate and detailed information which enables them to plan further improvements.
- Therapists make a strong contribution to pupils' achievements by providing specialist advice. They work closely alongside teachers in classrooms to support pupils and ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning for anyone.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding. Leaders and managers are totally committed to helping pupils develop into useful members of society with the best chances of getting rewarding work in the future.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result highly effective leadership.
- Middle leaders, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage and sixth form, have worked diligently to ensure that an impressively wide range of subjects and learning experiences is available for every pupil at the school site and beyond.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well developed through opportunities to participate in church and cathedral services. Their eye-catching work is displayed around the school, and they perform in local dance and music festivals.

- School leaders at all levels are consistently successful at getting the best from their teams. Procedures for setting targets for teachers are rigorous and leaders ensure that salary increases are not awarded unless staff have met their targets, based on pupils' progress.
- Training and development opportunities are highly regarded by all staff and are utterly focused on how to make teaching even better.
- Sports funding has been used to provide exceptionally well. School leaders have introduced a much wider range of sports and games, and have employed expert coaches to give pupils the very best chance of doing well.
- The school has a very positive profile locally and further afield. School leaders offer very well-received support to other schools through the Teaching School and other training.
- Procedures for safeguarding meet current requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors make an outstanding contribution by holding leaders and managers to account for all aspects of the school's performance. Because they visit regularly and commission reports on standards from staff and external consultants, they know that the standard of teaching is very high. They are able to make well-informed decisions about further improvements. They are knowledgeable about how the pupil premium and sports funding are used to enable more pupils to make even better progress. They have undertaken relevant training which allows them to be confident that all the school's systems for keeping pupils safe meet national requirements. Governors are fully aware of the links between pay and performance and what is being done to improve teaching even further. They set challenging targets for the Principal. Effective training means they are well placed to ask searching questions about the data which staff present on pupils' achievements.

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	137493
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	439961

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	190
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Harvey
Headteacher	Justin Philcox
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01761 412198
Fax number	01761 411751
Email address	office@fossewayschool.com

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