

Forest Academy

Bridle Road, Shirley, Croydon, CR0 8HQ

Inspection dates 29–30 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Leaders work together in an extremely effective partnership. They are strongly supported by governors. The improvements they have made to the running of the school are impressive. As a result, pupils make very strong progress in their learning and achieve well.
- Lines of communication are clear. Adults know what is expected of them. All contribute to the success of the school. Staff strongly back their leaders.
- Leaders understand the strengths of their school. They have detailed and well-focused plans to make it outstanding. The school is well placed to continue its journey of improvement.
- Leaders' management of the quality of teaching is outstanding. All leaders, including middle leaders, actively and effectively check the quality of teaching through lesson observations and by checking pupils' books. Leaders give staff helpful advice on how to improve, and make sure that the advice is followed.
- Governance is highly effective. Governors work in close partnership with school leaders. They share the school's vision for creating a happy, efficient learning environment where pupils respect one another.
- Leaders have implemented new and effective ways of checking how well pupils are learning. They make sure that teachers and support staff are fully involved in checking pupils' progress.
- The subjects pupils learn are exciting. The strong creative links between subjects mean that pupils get an all-round understanding of topics. They are encouraged to question rather than be passive in their learning.
- The drive towards excellence inspired by all leaders has a strong impact on pupils' behaviour. Pupils are confident, friendly and polite. They get on well with one another. The school promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development strongly. The school keeps pupils extremely safe.
- Teaching is good and secures good learning. Teachers question pupils well. They make learning interesting and lively.
- Achievement is good. Pupils learn well and make strong progress throughout the school. No group falls behind. Disadvantaged pupils do particularly well.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes benefit from a wide range of inviting activities, both indoors and in the attractive outdoor play areas.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most able pupils are not always helped to achieve as well as they could.
- Adults who mark pupils' books do not always insist on accurate spelling. As a result, pupils throughout the school spell less well than they should.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 31 lessons across a range of subjects. A number were observed jointly with the head of school or with the deputy headteachers.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of pupils, listened to them read and looked at samples of their work. An inspector met a group of pupils to hear how they felt about the school.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, including those who hold responsibility for specific year groups. At the invitation of the school, a meeting was held with the local authority Improvement Advisor for Teaching and Learning. A meeting was held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors took account of the views of staff in 43 questionnaires.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents during the inspection, and took account of a parental questionnaire provided by the school. Inspectors were unable to take into account responses to the online survey, Parent View, as there were too few to be published.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents. These included the school's own views of how well it is doing, its plans for the future and the minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered a range of evidence on pupils' attainment and progress. Inspectors also examined safeguarding information, and records relating to behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

Natalia Power, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Joanna Franklin

Additional inspector

Angela Podmore

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Forest Academy is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school converted to become an academy school on 1 September 2013 under the management of the Synaptic Trust, which also manages West Thornton Primary Academy. Forest Academy has not previously been inspected as an academy school. When its predecessor school, Spring Park Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory overall.
- The executive headteacher is a National Leader of Education. He is chief executive to the academy trust and supports other schools across the country. The head of school took up her appointment when the school converted to academy status. The two schools in the academy chain have separate governing bodies. The Chair of the Governing Body at Forest Academy is also Director of the Synaptic Trust.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic heritages is much higher than average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, with no one group predominating.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is broadly average.
- More pupils than average leave school or join it part-way through their school career.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- There is a children's centre on site. This is inspected separately.
- Most children attend the Nursery part time, either in the morning or in the afternoon sessions. A few stay all day. Children in Reception attend full time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that the most able pupils achieve as highly as they can in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - expecting the most from them
 - giving them similar close attention and challenge as is given to those who struggle with their work.
- Make sure that feedback in pupils' books makes clear where pupils have difficulty in spelling, and that adults reinforce correct spelling in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leadership is outstanding because leaders pursue excellence with energy and determination. Since the school became an academy, improvements have been rapid. Senior leaders, middle leaders and governors work together extremely effectively. They have secured good-quality teaching and good behaviour, and have excellent plans for making the school even better.
- The self-evaluation of leaders and governors is exemplary. They know the areas of the school's work that need improvement, and are clear about how to secure it. Staff share their vision and back their actions. A typical comment from one member of staff was, 'there have been dramatic improvements.'
- Lines of communication are clear. Leaders and managers provide support to those for whom they are responsible. All adults know what is expected of them. Middle leaders play an important role in making sure that the quality of teaching is consistently good, and that new entrants to the teaching profession are given the best possible start.
- Leaders manage the quality of teaching extremely well. Their central aim is to make pupils' learning as good as possible. To that end they conduct frequent observations of pupils' learning in class. They also look carefully at pupils' books to make sure that they are making strong progress. Leaders give staff excellent advice and make sure that it is followed up.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the quality of their performance management is extremely high. To get the best from all staff, they involve them in setting their own targets for improved performance. Leaders and staff cooperate in identifying the training staff need and ensuring that pupils benefit from it.
- The school draws on a wide range of expertise to promote improvement. Leaders continue to work with the local authority. Advisors from the local authority provide helpful advice to leaders on ensuring that pupils' work is accurately measured and that the quality of teaching improves.
- Leaders have implemented improved systems for measuring pupils' progress. They ensure that all staff are involved in checking progress. As a result, staff are vigilant in identifying any pupil or group in danger of falling behind. This enables staff to put timely support in place.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit greatly from the close checks made on pupils' achievement. They do as well as other pupils in the school, and sometimes better than other pupils nationally.
- Leaders and governors ensure that all pupils and groups of pupils have an equal chance to succeed. This is because the school has created a culture where all members respect one another and there is no discrimination against anyone.
- Safeguarding arrangements are stringent and highly effective, so that pupils are safe at school.
- The additional funding for primary schools sports is used extremely effectively to introduce new participants to sports. The school ensures that as many pupils as possible play sports, for example, by checking that a wide range of pupils attend after-school sporting activities.
- The school goes to great lengths to engage with parents. Inspectors observed the 'learn and lunch' session for Years 1 and 2, which was well attended by parents. Those who came gained a clear understanding of how their children learn and what they can do to help at home. A typical comment from one parent was, 'I enjoyed learning alongside my child and would love to come to another event.' Though there were few responses to the online survey of parents' views, the school could not have done more to encourage responses, texting parents several times and using social media.
- The subjects pupils learn prepare them effectively for the next stage of schooling. They get a good grounding in English and mathematics. Many topics stimulate pupils' curiosity and encourage them to learn a wide range of subjects in a creative way. A Year 4 science topic, for example, to find the melting point of chocolate, was also used successfully in English. One pupil designed a leaflet persuading others to try her invented 'life-changing chocolate', writing, 'It will change your life from terrible to cool.'
- Pupils benefit from a wide variety of outings and visits to places of interest, designed to deepen their understanding. For example, the Year 4 chocolate topic mentioned above came alive to pupils following a trip to a chocolate museum.
- The school prepares pupils extremely well for life in modern Britain, helping them to grow up with strong values. The school is a 'Unicef Rights Respecting' school. Inspectors observed a highly effective assembly where it was clear that pupils understood what is meant by universal rights. One pupil said it means, 'The right to go to school and the right to say what we think.' The assembly then explored, with pupils' contributions, their responsibilities in exercising those rights, such as being tolerant and following the rule of law.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is highly effective. Governors work in close partnership with school leaders. They are

experienced and know the school very well. They have been instrumental in ensuring that the school's smooth transition into academy status has brought enormous benefits to pupils. They share the leaders' vision of excellence, and are successful in appointing people committed to achieving it.

- Governors know the work of the school. They visit often to check its work for themselves. They understand how pupils are doing in relation to others in the country as a whole. Their close involvement with the school and their searching questioning ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- Governors understand the quality of teaching extremely well. They visit classes to assure themselves that learning is strong and that behaviour is good. Governors keep a close eye on the link between teachers' movement along the pay scales and how well pupils are performing. Governors are not afraid to tackle any underperformance, should it occur. In this way they help ensure that the school receives excellent value for money from its staff.
- Governors are very well trained and carry out extremely effectively their statutory obligations to keep pupils safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are confident, articulate and friendly. Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and heritages get on well with one another. Pupils who arrive part-way through their school career told inspectors that they are quickly welcomed into the school community.
- Pupils report that the behaviour of their fellow pupils is good and does not disrupt lessons.
- Pupils play considerately in the playground. At lunch they are polite and well mannered.
- There are very few behaviour incidents, and there have been no exclusions this year. The school keeps orderly records to ensure that any incidents are logged and that all those involved are notified.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. However, they do not display exceptional eagerness to learn. Sometimes their attention wanders and they become a little fidgety.
- Those who attend breakfast club or stay for after-school care are looked after well, given healthy food, and provided with worthwhile activities. Pupils enjoyed eating sandwiches that they had made themselves.
- Attendance is on a rising trend. Leaders and the education welfare officer work closely with parents to ensure that absences are tackled quickly.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development strongly. For example, in one Year 6 discussion of philosophy, pupils tackled such difficult topics as, 'Should bad people have the right to freedom of speech?' They showed through their confident and thoughtful responses that the school encourages them to think deeply about the world they live in.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The site, though large, is very secure. Governors undertake site walks to make sure there are no hazards.
- Adults who work with pupils are rigorously checked. Child protection procedures are scrupulous. All staff are trained in child protection. Visitors to the school are given a card to read explaining how they can play a part in keeping children safe, for example, by listening to any disclosure a pupil might make.
- Staff think about any possible risks before undertaking any visit or potentially hazardous activity. For example, adults carefully considered in advance all the risks to children there might be in a pond-dipping activity.
- The school helps pupils to keep themselves safe. They understand what bullying means and report that there is no actual bullying. On rare occasions that pupils experience unkindness they have access to 'bullying boxes' and 'worry boxes' in their classroom. They know that these are regularly checked. The 'Wisdom World', an attractively furnished room, provides a refuge for vulnerable pupils at play and lunchtimes. Leaders check its use carefully to help them provide effective support for pupils who might be going through difficult times.
- Pupils are taught about dangers from using the internet, from strangers and from road traffic. Such awareness helps to keep them safe.

The quality of teaching is good

- The consistently good quality of teaching secures good achievement from the pupils.
- Teachers and support staff expect a good deal from the pupils. This enables most pupils, particularly those with a range of additional needs, to make strong progress in their learning. Sometimes expectations are not high enough for the most able pupils, who do not always receive close enough attention from adults. As a result, they are not always encouraged to aim for the top grades.
- The school's push to improve the quality of feedback has been largely successful. Marking provides much helpful guidance to pupils on how to improve. However, spelling errors are not always picked up rigorously enough. Adults do not always reinforce correct spelling, or encourage pupils to use a dictionary to find correct spellings for themselves. Pupils' results in the national Year 6 tests of spelling, grammar and punctuation have been lower than average, and leaders have identified weak spelling as the principal cause.
- Teaching assistants provide valuable support to pupils who struggle with their work or who have a range of additional needs. This enables all groups to make good progress so that no group falls behind.
- Adults use questioning effectively. Pupils are not allowed to get away with vague or imprecise answers, but are questioned to make sure they back up their answers with evidence.
- Pupils told inspectors that teachers make learning enjoyable. One pupil commented that English 'lets you express your feelings'. Another particularly liked science because of the chance to find things out through experiments.
- Relationships in the classroom are good and behaviour is managed well. Pupils report that fellow pupils rarely disrupt lessons.
- Teaching in mathematics is effective. The focus on problem solving helps pupils to understand the fundamentals of mathematics, not just to work by rote.
- Reading is improving throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged to read at home as well as at school. Pupils who read aloud to inspectors showed that they had received a good grounding in learning their sounds and letters (phonics).
- Writing is a particular strength of the school. Pupils enjoy writing about the wide range of stimulating topics they explore in lessons, and this is reflected in the imaginative writing they produce. Pupils are encouraged to look at the strengths of their own and fellow pupils' writing, and to say what could be improved. In this way they learn what constitutes effective writing.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good. All pupils make strong progress. No group falls behind. Pupils leave school with broadly average attainment. The school's strong focus on literacy and numeracy prepares pupils well for the next stage of schooling.
- The most able pupils make strong progress. However, they are not always encouraged to reach as high as possible. The proportion gaining the top grade, Level 6, is lower than average.
- Pupils who join the school part-way through their school career do as well as those who attend from the start. This is because they are quickly welcomed and made to feel part of the community. Their individual needs, such as language needs, are identified quickly, and effective support is put in place promptly.
- Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and ethnic heritages do equally well in their learning. In July 2014 the school was awarded a Quality Inclusion Mark for its commitment to providing a good education for all within the school's diverse community.
- The school cares extremely well for disadvantaged pupils (those supported by additional funding through the pupil premium). Leaders and governors rigorously check how well they are doing compared to other pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make strong progress. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils at the school made stronger progress than other pupils nationally. Current Year 6 pupils are expected to make even stronger progress.
- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils shows that the school provides for them well. In 2014 disadvantaged pupils outperformed other pupils in the school in reading, writing and mathematics.

Compared with other pupils nationally, they were slightly ahead in writing, and two terms behind in reading and mathematics, a narrower gap than that found nationally. Disadvantaged pupils in the current Year 6 are expected to narrow the gap further.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do well at the school and make good progress. Their needs are quickly identified. They receive effective support individually and in small groups.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive good individual care. They make good progress in line with others. Their attainment is at least as good and sometimes better than that of other pupils.

The early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is well led. Senior leaders have overall management of the Nursery and Reception years. They draw on the expertise of the early years leader of West Thornton Primary Academy, who divides her time between the two schools.
- Planning is a strength of the early years provision. Children of Nursery and Reception age share the large indoor and outdoor spaces. Staff make sure that all the children get the right level of challenge from the activities. This enables each child to make good progress and learn well. Staff take pains to ensure that the few children who stay all day at the Nursery receive a varied programme of activities. In this way they do not repeat what they learned in the morning.
- Behaviour is good. Children are ready to share the equipment and take turns on the climbing frames. Children are kept safe. The play areas are secure, and adults who work with the children are properly checked.
- Teaching is good, enabling children to make good progress in all areas of learning. Occasionally adults do too much for the children that they could do for themselves, and this slightly limits their opportunities to explore. Mostly, however, children have a wide choice of activities and concentrate well on carrying them out.
- Adults are careful to promote children's speaking skills. For example, an adult asked a child exploring a tray containing living snails why snails have antennae. The child accurately replied using a complete sentence: 'They have antennae because they have eyes in their antennae.'
- The activities, both indoors and in the attractive outdoor spaces, are inviting and appeal strongly to the children's imaginations. The school promotes the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development strongly, for instance, by enabling them to touch and care for living creatures such as chicks and snails. Children have plenty of chances to explore the school's woodland setting. Such opportunities give children a sense of wonder and a strong appreciation of nature.
- Children achieve well in the early years provision. They make good progress in all areas of learning. This is because adults carefully check how well each child is doing and give extra and effective help to those who need it.
- Children are prepared well for their move into Year 1. Staff from Year 1 visit the Reception Year's story times, and children visit the classes they will be moving to. They move confidently to the next stage, equipped with the literacy, numeracy and social skills that will enable them to play a full part in the life of the school.

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	140113
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	450331

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Robinson
Headteacher	Stuart Roberts (Executive Headteacher), Lucy Campbell (Head of School)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	020 8777 2808
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