

The Forest School

Robin Hood Lane, Winnersh, Wokingham, Berkshire RG41 5NE

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The new headteacher has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has acted quickly to address areas which need rapid improvement.
- The use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils provides a wide range of support. However, leaders are not yet measuring how effective these strategies are in improving academic outcomes.
- Leaders acknowledge that teaching needs to be improved so that the most able pupils and those who are disadvantaged make maximum progress in all their subjects.
- The school's assessment systems are currently being restructured so that expectations are set at a higher level. Leaders are confident that this will ensure that more pupils reach at least similar if not better outcomes than other pupils who have the same starting points nationally.
- Achievement varies between subjects. In the last GCSE results, some pupils performed below average in some subjects. Some of that variation still remains as indicated in the school's internal performance information.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has gained the confidence of the parents, staff and pupils in tackling some inherent weaknesses. She has strong support from the senior team and other members of staff in driving the school forward at a faster pace than previously.
- The personal development programme is effective. Pupils' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues is well developed. Pupils are proud of their school. They are smartly dressed and well behaved.
- The sixth-form provision remains a strength of the school. Academic outcomes continue to improve.
- Middle leaders have increasingly taken a more strategic role in leading improvements to teaching.
- The governors have improved procedures to give them better oversight of the school's work.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall effectiveness of teaching so that it routinely challenges pupils, particularly the most able, to make better progress than in the past.
- Ensure that disadvantaged pupils rapidly catch up where necessary, as a result of high-quality teaching and support.
- Continue to develop middle leaders so that they work closely with senior leaders to drive through more rapid improvement and further embed the recent changes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- There has been a considerable step-change following the arrival of the new headteacher. She has been a real pacesetter and has rallied the staff and pupils to raise expectations. She is well supported by a cohesive team of senior leaders. They are determined to make the required changes to improve support for pupils' learning.
- After careful research, leaders have established a new assessment system which will provide aspirational targets for individual pupils. It will be launched next month to simplify and add rigour to how teachers assess pupils' work. Leaders recognise that the current system lacks sufficient challenge. There is a wide variety of formats across different subject departments and this confuses some pupils.
- After consulting widely, senior leaders have made several changes to the curriculum. They have reintroduced food and nutrition, which was popular with the boys and their parents. Setting of groups in the upper school is now more refined. About 30% of pupils are now accessing a modern foreign language. Leaders have recognised that religious education needed more curriculum time, and this has been organised for the new timetable. This will increase the depth of learning, provide more time for discussion of important issues, and allow prolonged discussion time for controversial topics in a safe environment. Currently, much of the richness of learning is lost in the rush to cover topics in a reduced amount of time.
- Leaders have taken on board suggestions from the staff and have now reorganised the options process to start in Year 9 in order to provide more time for coverage of GCSE subjects. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are well supported by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) during the option process, which ensures they have a well-tailored package to maximise their learning. Pupils receive good advice and guidance to prepare them for the future and, consequently, the vast majority of pupils go on to further education or employment.
- The school has a strong reputation for sporting prowess, and the wide range of extra-curricular activities encourages pupils to stay healthy. There is a strong link with Reading Football Academy for young players, and approximately 14 pupils from the academy join the school at the start of Year 10 and in Year 11 for academic study as part of their course.
- Pastoral leaders have revamped the curriculum for personal development to ensure it remains up to date and engaging. They have worked with outside agencies to provide material and speakers so that the information provided to pupils is relevant and can signpost them to further information if required. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain and some of the older pupils were very proud of the tolerance and respect which pupils show to one another. Inspectors observed maturity as well as willingness to listen from fellow pupils during personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons where some quite difficult topics were explored. However, staff and pupils were hesitant when asked to talk about British values, and it was apparent that while there is good coverage of them in a range of ways, they need to be referred to more explicitly.
- The school leaders have worked closely with the local authority to develop a strategy for maximising the impact of the grant for pupil premium. This is now in place and a wide

range of support is in operation. However, leaders do not measure the impact of this work rigorously enough to ensure greater academic success for disadvantaged pupils.

- The Year 7 catch-up premium is used very effectively to improve pupils' reading ages. There is a successful programme in place that has ensured those pupils rapidly improve their reading. There is less provision for numeracy, but the mathematics department ensures that pupils make good progress, and this is evident in strong internal-performance information and in GCSE examination results.
- Newly qualified teachers feel well supported. They meet regularly with their mentors and appreciate the advice available. They also attend the network meetings provided via the local federation of secondary schools. Student teachers equally enjoy the professional development activities on offer to them.
- Staff feel that the senior leaders try to alleviate workload and reduce pressure. Some stated that the recent changes had reduced workload for staff. They feel consulted and well supported. They welcome the opportunities they have for professional development, including peer coaching.

Governance of the school

- The governors have reacted promptly to an external review following the previous inspection. They have a detailed action plan for their own development. They have recruited a new, dynamic headteacher who started at the school in September.
- Governors are now more actively involved in setting the strategic direction for the school without becoming overly involved in the day-to-day running of the school. They have worked with the headteacher to develop the vision for the school moving forward. They have undertaken training and are now in a much better position to question leaders and hold them to account.
- Good examples are available in the minutes of governing body meetings to show how governors are confidently questioning leaders. However, in spite of some improvements, governors recognise that the school needs to do more to reduce underachievement for disadvantaged pupils, as their outcomes have not been sufficiently high in the GCSE results over the last two years.
- Governors exercise oversight of the performance management system, which has been overhauled this academic year. They ensure that pay decisions are fair and linked closely to improving the school's performance more rapidly.
- Governors have reviewed a number of school policies. They are now all up to date (including the safeguarding and child protection policy) and available in school. The policies have been loaded on to a new school website which is being launched imminently, which is the reason why some documentation on the current school website is out of date.
- The headteacher and governors have worked together to ensure that the school is financially stable, and have been industrious in finding grants to support some work to improve buildings.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding team is well organised, thorough and efficient in its day-to-day operations. Its record-keeping is meticulous. Confidential records for child protection cases are kept securely and only accessed by the team or the headteacher. The team has good communication both with external agencies and internally with the pastoral team.
- All staff complete online safeguarding training when they join the school. They have regular updates, including recently on the 'Prevent' duty. Pupils also have regular information about how to keep themselves safe, both in assemblies and in tutorials, as part of the personal-development programme. The school runs an internet safety week to ensure that the messages are reinforced about keeping safe online.
- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View felt that their sons were happy, settled at school, and felt safe. Bullying is a rarity, and when it happens it is dealt with very effectively by school staff. Pupils also said they felt safe at school and knew who to go to if they had any problems. They like the fact they can approach other pupils who are trained as safe-school leaders to talk through any problems.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the most able. Planning is variable and teachers do not always address the needs of their pupils. Some teachers miss opportunities to build on pupils' prior knowledge. Pupils are usually well behaved, but where lessons are not engaging they quietly stop listening and therefore do not make the progress they are capable of.
- Some pupils' books can be a little untidy at times. In some instances teachers do not promote high standards of presentation and do not ensure that pupils meet the schools' checklist of expectations for written work.
- The strongest teaching was observed in mathematics and English lessons where pupils were challenged to think deeply and had numerous opportunities to practise skills and acquire new knowledge in interesting and engaging ways.
- The majority of teachers make good use of their subject knowledge to provide a range of learning activities. For example, in a geography lesson pupils described animatedly what they had been learning on the topic of coastal erosion. In a swimming lesson pupils were using their skills cards properly to improve their stroke for the front crawl. A Year 11 art group was fully engaged in comparing the work of a range of artists and how it might link to their own work, facilitated by helpful, detailed guidance from the teacher.
- Teachers are using a variety of ways to provide feedback to pupils in line with school policy but it is not consistent.
- Teaching assistants are used routinely to provide additional support in lessons, which pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities find helpful. Pupils described good relationships with assistants, who provide regular and helpful support. One explained how the assistant gives clear explanations, but makes sure pupils put in the required effort.

- The provision for bilingual pupils is acknowledged locally as being a particular strength of the school. This is backed up by the strong evidence of progress for bilingual pupils which was observed in lessons.
- Parents value the communication they have with staff, saying that they are generous with their time. Some parents commented on low expectations being evident sometimes, but many commented on the improved approach to homework now. There were some issues raised where parents felt that the use of temporary teachers had inhibited progress.
- Senior leaders have revamped the lesson observation process to provide better feedback for teachers. A group of staff are now working with senior leaders to provide ways of addressing underperformance. This group ensures that good practice already evident in the school is shared more widely, and staff now have a more structured process for improving their practice.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are tolerant and respectful and work well with the adults in the school. Pupils are welcoming, and in lessons there was good evidence of excellent relationships with the majority of their teachers. They appreciate that staff will often give them extra time for support.
- Pupils speak highly of the programmes for personal development, which include many relevant topics to support them in staying safe. They cover a wide range of interesting topics and find the information useful.
- Parents rated highly the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They feel staff are supportive and ensure that their sons make progress in line with expectations. The SENCo provides a wide range of information and training to the staff.
- Careers education is woven into the personal development programme right from the earliest years. Year 10 pupils described a recent opportunity where local business leaders and governors gave them mock interviews, and they rated the experience very highly.
- Year 9 had an enterprise challenge day where they designed merchandise for an event. This gave them valuable experience of working in teams. There are a range of extra-curricular clubs and trips which pupils enjoy.
- The school provides part-time education for talented young footballers in a link with Reading Football Academy. One parent summed up the provision: 'Our son undertakes a hybrid programme with Reading Football Club. We would like to say that we really appreciate the positive attitude the school takes to allowing and encouraging boys to follow two paths, i.e. education but also their football talent. Not all schools are so encouraging of other talents but in our view this enables our son to be motivated on his educational path too.'
- The school runs a successful partnership with a local swimming club to make good use of the swimming pool facilities. Some pupils are being offered places over the summer on a course to obtain the National Pool Lifeguard Qualification. The club also trains the school swimming squad.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and friendly around the site, and movement between lessons is orderly. Some pupils mentioned that the new headteacher had introduced a stricter regime, which they felt had improved behaviour generally. Pupils are very clear on the sanctions and rewards available.
- Leaders provided records that show a decrease in behavioural issues over the year. The newly established behaviour policy has already shown impact. The school has a 'return to learn' programme which supports those pupils with behavioural issues.
- Fixed-term exclusions have reduced this year. Senior leaders track the information carefully to ensure that vulnerable pupils are supported according to their individual needs. The school is now actively working with the local federation of secondary schools to ensure that the fair-access protocol works to support pupils when they need temporary placements in another school. Permanent exclusions are higher than average but relate to a small number of one-off incidents of a serious nature.
- Attendance is usually good and shows an improving trend. However, there are a small number of poor attendees. The leaders do not routinely track the attendance of groups, which means they are unsure if attendance is improving, especially for disadvantaged pupils.
- The majority of parents reported that their sons were happy at school and felt safe. They were generally impressed with the way staff deal with the boys as they develop into young men.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Overall progress was significantly below the national average for the last two years. Progress for disadvantaged pupils was significantly below the national average for other pupils for the last two years.
- In 2017 the most able pupils did not make the progress they should have done. The proportion of strong passes was not as high as it could have been. This is a key area for development in the school development plan this year but in some lessons the most able were not being challenged appropriately. Teachers now have ready access to accurate performance information, which they use to support them in planning lessons. Middle leaders are able to plan better for those who need subject support.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved both English and mathematics at grade 4+ and 5+ in 2017 was above the national average by around 10 percentage points. Pupils of all abilities continue to perform well in mathematics. English books also show good coverage of skills and knowledge, and current predictions show that English continues to show a steady increase in achievement.
- Teachers now have ready access to accurate performance information, which they use to support them in planning lessons. Middle leaders are able to plan better for those who need subject support.
- Senior leaders have taken steps to address gaps in achievement, but current information shows that attainment and progress are not improving rapidly enough. There is a

programme of targeted support for Year 11 pupils, and leaders mentor those pupils who are too far away from their target grades, but the impact of this work is not yet evident.

- In the past, targets have been set in a variety of ways in different year groups. Leaders realise that a step change is needed to ensure high challenge for all. As a result, leaders are changing the way targets are set for the future.
- In key stage 3, performance information shows that, although the majority of subjects are on track, there are still some that are lagging behind. Also, the performance of disadvantaged pupils still reveals gaps which have not yet closed sufficiently.
- Recent changes of staffing in science have limited progress for some pupils.
- The SENCo has changed systems and improved communication, and as a result pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are now making good progress from their starting points. The SENCo ensures that staff are well informed, and she plans provision carefully to support academic achievement as well as social and emotional development.
- There are good systems to support the development of reading. The library provides a lovely environment for the further development of reading for pleasure. Those pupils who need additional help to catch up have been supported well.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Progress was significantly above average in 2017 and in the top 10% for AS- and A-level students who had a grade A or above on entry to their courses.
- In 2017, students performed at or above national averages in A levels for mathematics, geography, physics, media, chemistry, sports studies and photography.
- Of the students in 2017 who needed to improve their GCSE in mathematics, six out of seven improved their grades.
- Students feel well prepared for applying to universities or joining employment. A large majority go on to further education and/or training or employment. They have excellent access to a careers adviser.
- Teaching and learning in the sixth form are of a high standard, and students enjoy their learning. Homework is available online and helps students organise their study time more effectively.
- Current predictions show similar attainment and progress, which will add to the steady trajectory of improvement.
- Each student has a tutor in the sixth form and this ensures strong communication. There is a well-established support system for applications to university. Counsellors are available for those who wish to make appointments or students are referred via the head of sixth form.
- There are wide-ranging opportunities for extra-curricular clubs or trips. Some are related to specific subjects and others offer excellent experiences for personal growth. For example, students took part in the World Challenge in 2017, when they visited China, and plans are in place for 2019, when students can visit Madagascar.
- Students have opportunities to develop further leadership skills in the sixth form, and they

provide excellent role models to pupils in the lower school.

School details

Unique reference number	139853
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	10046574

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	991
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	219
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Anna McMenamin
Headteacher	Shirley Austin
Telephone number	01189 781 626
Website	www.forest.wokingham.sch.uk/
Email address	office@forest.wokingham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	February 2016

Information about this school

- The school uploaded the most recent safeguarding policy on to the website during the inspection.
- The school is a larger-than-average-sized 11 to 18 secondary school with a sixth form.
- This is a single-sex school for boys aged 11 to 16, and the school is mixed in the sixth form.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.

- The school has a link with the Reading Football Academy and admits up to 28 pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 58 lessons across all the year groups and a variety of subjects. 23 of these were joint observations with school leaders. Inspectors visited two assemblies, tutorial time and PSHE lessons in Year 7 and Year 10.
- The views of pupils and sixth-form students were taken into account, and inspectors formally met with four groups of pupils, as well as speaking with pupils in lessons and around the school. They listened to readers in a lesson and considered three responses to the pupil online questionnaire. Inspectors reviewed pupils' work in books during visits to lessons.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account 169 responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, including 143 free-text responses.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders, representatives of the governing body and trustees, groups of middle leaders and teachers. They also telephoned two local authority advisers and the manager of the federation of local secondary schools.
- Inspectors analysed a wide range of documentation, including the school's strategic planning documents, minutes of governors' meetings, the single record of recruitment checks, safeguarding information and a range of policies. Inspectors reviewed information about pupils' attainment and progress and reports of attendance, exclusions and behaviour.

Inspection team

Beverley Murtagh, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Alistair Brien	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Willman	Ofsted Inspector
Charlotte Wilson	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018