

# Forest Bridge School

Chiltern Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1XA

## Inspection dates

13–14 June 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Since the school opened, leaders have firmly established a well-rounded approach to pupils' learning. Pupils thrive at Forest Bridge because of highly personalised opportunities that match pupils' needs extremely well.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate and perceptive. As a result, leaders have experienced a high degree of success at strengthening the provision year on year. By commissioning outside expertise within specific fields, leaders have ensured that the school continues to develop.
- The school is making good use of external training to further develop its leadership capacity as some leaders are relatively inexperienced. Nevertheless, expertise internally, particularly in safeguarding, is not yet at a stage where leaders can confidently hold one another to account with sufficient precision and know-how.
- The school's curriculum is balanced well to contain appropriate emphasis on improving pupils' ability to self-regulate their emotions, progress academically and enjoy learning. Leaders keep the curriculum under watchful review, recognising that careers guidance for pupils is at an early stage.
- Typically, the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Pupils appreciate their lessons and gain satisfaction from progressing well in a range of skills and aptitudes. Nevertheless, opportunities to develop and rehearse writing skills are to a certain extent restrictive and this slows pupils' progress.
- On joining, pupils quickly begin to enjoy school, often after a fractured previous experience of education. Their rapidly improved attendance rates and positive engagement in learning pay testament to this.
- High expectations and excellent relationships between staff and pupils enable all pupils to improve their behaviour and achieve well from their typically low starting points.
- Safeguarding is effective. There is a strong ethos of universal care for each pupil. This means that staff work closely with pupils and their families to ensure that support is well directed and makes a difference.
- Governors are highly skilled and complement the school's leadership team well. They drill into information, asking challenging questions of school leaders. They contribute well to whole-school improvement and support future plans.

## Full report

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

- As the school continues to develop and grow, strengthen leadership and management, by:
  - distributing leadership responsibilities more widely so that more staff contribute more directly to shaping the school's future direction
  - refining safeguarding systems and processes by developing the school's own in-house expertise
  - enhancing the school's curriculum so that it includes a stronger emphasis on informing pupils about future opportunities.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing by providing high-quality opportunities for pupils to write in a range of subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, loyally supported by both her executive and senior teams, has a clear vision, widely shared and fully embraced by all staff. Since the school opened in 2015, the headteacher, with experience in the field of 'applied behaviour analysis', has worked diligently to establish, grow and then strengthen the school's provision. Year on year, under her leadership, the school's effectiveness has improved as systems and processes evolve securely under the watchful eye of a highly committed staff team.
- Parents and carers set up the school, determined that pupils, whose previous experiences were often disjointed, received equal opportunity to enjoy learning and achieve well. Leaders have taken their time to ensure that the curriculum is balanced and contains a broad range of subjects. They have also strengthened the quality of teaching and learning considerably, training new staff in the school's approaches. As a result, pupils re-engage with schooling successfully, understanding the expectations set for them. The vast majority go on to achieve well.
- Leaders' school improvement planning is comprehensive and is suitably evolving and adapting as the school grows in numbers. Increasingly, more staff are holding significant responsibilities including for subject leadership. Staff are well supported to develop their skills and expertise, including those at an early stage of leadership experience. The school invests significantly in training opportunities and many staff are committed to achieving external accreditations, such as those provided by the National College for Teaching and Leadership. However, these staff are yet to have a striking impact on influencing the school's future direction as this work is at a very early stage.
- The staff team are cohesive and are very committed to ensuring that pupils do as well as they possibly can. Staff feel very well supported, receiving regular feedback on how to improve their skills and expertise, including those at an early stage of their career development. Most staff rightly believe that the school is aspirational for all of its pupils.
- Curriculum programmes are designed thoughtfully and are readily adapted to meet pupils' individual needs, interests and aspirations. Leaders have designed these programmes reflectively to cater for 'early', 'intermediate' or 'advanced' learners, regardless of age group. When planning, staff sensitively keep in mind pupils' diverse learning needs and varied capacity to access more traditional academic opportunities. This means that each individualised curriculum pathway meets the needs of pupils admirably and everyone has an equal chance of success.
- Enrichment activities deliver a varied menu including go karting, horse riding and skiing that augments the school's curriculum well. Pupils readily described their satisfaction in learning across a range of subject areas. Leaders are planning diligently for next year as some pupils will move into key stage 4 for the first time. Leaders are determined to shape the best possible pathway for each individual pupil to enable strong outcomes. Governors are supporting intensely, too, assisting in the development of a careers programme by identifying links with local business partners. Nevertheless, this work is at an early stage and is not yet fully established.
- The school's use of additional funding, particularly the primary physical education and

sport premium, is very effective. On joining the school, pupils' participation in a range of activities rapidly increases. As in other undertakings, the school's success is down to the expertise of staff, including visiting specialists, who are adept at ensuring that activities appeal to pupils. Pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem improve as a result of their engagement in a wide range of captivating opportunities.

- Leaders are determined to forge a durable partnership with parents. Parents are regularly invited to participate in a range of training, which includes topics such as 'social communication strategies'. Increasingly, leaders are valuing the benefits of two-way working, reaching out with greater intent in order to engage parents and families. Parents are rightly complimentary about the school's effectiveness, with one noting: 'Our child is making excellent progress with his behaviour and social skills and also, happily, with academic progress. School staff make efforts to support us with difficulties outside of school relating to our child.'
- Every aspect of school life is inclusive. Pupils have a strong sense of their role within British society and demonstrate a good understanding of the need for tolerance and respect.

### **Governance of the school**

- The school's trustees also act as governors and this arrangement includes strong parental representation. The governing body has acted as a reliable lynchpin, offering invaluable support at an unnerving time, as the school seeks the security of a permanent site. Trustees and governors had originally planned to open a purpose-built school in 2017. However, following planning difficulties, stakeholders have modified their intentions and are now well under way with securing an alternative site. All anticipate operating at capacity (96 pupils) by 2020.
- Governors make good use of a variety of training to strengthen their skills well, including in aspects such as safeguarding, governance and health and safety matters. For example, the chair and vice-chair have both completed a governance leadership development programme. Equally, in conducting regular skills audits, governors are adept at highlighting areas that they need to strengthen in order to offer a higher level of challenge and support. They recruit new members tactically to shore up any emerging skills deficits.
- Governors are highly reflective. One commented that: 'We are learning as we have developed and grown.' Their thoughtful and responsive approach demonstrates governors' determination that the school's effectiveness continues to improve, including as leaders prepare to cater for key stage 4 pupils next academic year.
- Governors monitor the school's performance closely in a range of aspects such as behaviour and learning. They make good use of the expertise of others and receive regular reports from the headteacher and other senior staff to keep well informed. Governors ask challenging questions about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They make regular visits to find out for themselves the quality of education and its impact.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's policy meets requirements and acts as a useful reference point for staff, including those who are relatively new to the school. Staff's training is comprehensive, including the school's induction programme for new staff, which is detailed and helpful. Additionally, staff, on a weekly basis, contemplate safeguarding themes, such as what to do if a case of female genital mutilation is suspected. This means that staff fully understand their responsibilities, knowing what to do and who to report to. Keeping pupils safe is kept at the forefront of everybody's work.
- Leaders and staff are highly committed to each pupil's all-inclusive care. The school's work has a strong moral purpose and, as a result, care and consideration often extend beyond the school day, through strong partnership working with each family. For example, parents recently attended training on 'how to keep your child safe online'. In other examples, pupils' health needs are supported by liaising closely with the family.
- Leaders and governors had identified previous weaknesses in the school's safeguarding procedures. Wisely, they commissioned an external consultant to support the school's rapid development in this aspect. Helpfully, advice received has been spot on and leaders acted promptly to ensure that the insightful recommendations were met in full. For example, all of the checks required for newly appointed staff and governors are in place, although some were completed retrospectively. The school's processes now align well and are compliant with statutory guidance. It is important that leaders, including the school's designated safeguarding leads, now strengthen their own expertise in this field, in order to hold one another to account more strongly. This will then ensure that those responsible do not develop dependency on external support in order to know and implement what is expected.
- Leaders ensure that pupils and families who require additional support are put in touch with the right agencies, for example the youth offending team. Leaders have worked diligently to improve the school's record-keeping, beginning to build clearer chronologies of concerns and actions relating to individual pupils. Nevertheless, the actions that staff and others take are not yet captured in sufficient detail, or within each individual pupil's case record. Leaders know the importance of developing systems further so that all relevant information is located in one place and fully reflects the school's actions.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The school's specialist tutors, specialist supervisors and teaching staff work well together. This is because roles and responsibilities are fully understood and pupils' best interests sit firmly at the heart of everybody's work. Specialist therapists offer an additional dimension that supports pupils' learning well.
- Learning targets are clearly articulated to pupils so they know what is expected and what to do in order to be successful. Staff are highly alert to the subtlest indicators of progress, capturing each pupil's incremental, forward steps in detailed, ongoing assessment records. To achieve this, staff display unwavering commitment and energy in their roles. Consequently, pupils' needs are met well and fully understood.
- Pupils maintain the highest levels of engagement and concentration in learning

activities. Highly skilled staff and the school's well-considered curriculum ensure that tasks appeal and pupils' interest is retained. Adults regularly revisit concepts, generalising aspects of learning clearly for pupils. This helps pupils to develop confidence and move on with ease to new and more demanding tasks.

- Adults consistently hold high expectations. Their skilful questioning and prompting enables pupils to shape their responses and experience success in learning. Adults are adept at allowing pupils sufficient thinking time. In the strongest examples, adults demonstrate patience and persistence, knowing that with just the right amount of time to process information pupils will experience success and come up with the right response, such as when responding to stories in reading activities.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Staff have received helpful training and, increasingly, pupils are benefiting from improved resourcing, including the better use of visual aids. This helps pupils consolidate their understanding of new concepts. Pupils are then, for example, able to tackle word problems as they have both the reading and mathematical skills required in order to be successful.
- The teaching of writing is still developing. In the primary phase, opportunities to develop early reading skills are more prevalent. Pupils do not readily transfer their skills to writing tasks. In the secondary phase, some opportunities to write in other subjects are overlooked. For example, in science pupils do not always learn how to record their findings or draw conclusions when conducting scientific experiments.
- Pupils say that they enjoy learning because, unlike previous experiences for many, they are afforded time to do well. Similarly, they quickly develop the skills needed to be able to work happily alongside one another without interruption or distraction.
- Learning is enhanced by a range of experts including speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. The school also makes use of subject specialists, particularly in key stage 3. The school's approach places the whole child at its core.
- Routines, including in assembly, are used well to promote success. Staff offer praise regularly and pupils respond positively. Comments such as: 'Yes you can do it. That is correct' are commonplace. If necessary, from time to time, support is intensified to address pupils' needs. This approach is highly successful.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Parents rightly note that leaders respond well to any concerns. One of the key strengths of the school is the commitment of staff to support every aspect of pupils' development, in partnership with their families. One parent noted: 'Any concerns I have about my son, the school will write a specific behaviour programme to address the issue. For example, my son ate nothing green until he went to Forest Bridge, it took a month of hard work but now he eats his greens!'
- Pupils develop their self-esteem well and become increasingly positive about their self-image. They feel valued and cared for by staff who are attentive and compassionate. One pupil told an inspector that there is 'less pressure' in this school. As a result,

pupils' behaviour improves significantly and many develop the ability to manage their emotions and regulate their responses appropriately.

- Pupils quickly understand the school's values of respect, achievement, enjoyment and perseverance and so settle in well. Previous damaging attitudes to school dissipate over time. One pupil noted: 'My behaviour has improved since I started this school.' This is highly evident in many pupils' personal testimonies of how much better their schooling is now.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well considered and woven smoothly through the school's curriculum. From a starting point, for many, of limited social understanding, pupils' ability to act appropriately in social, moral and spiritual situations is developing well.
- Leaders understand the unique nature of each pupil. Exceptionally strong relationships ensure that pupils have confidence in the adults who care for them. This enables pupils to develop independent skills and positive attitudes.
- Last academic year, the school formed its 'student government'. Pupils enjoy contributing to whole-school decision-making, such as when choosing names for the school's guinea pigs. This also enabled pupils to experience democracy in action first-hand as they took a vote and chose fairly.
- Leaders have worked determinedly to ensure that the school's temporary buildings are safe, fit for purpose and support their educational aims. For example, leaders have improved the school's site, making changes to fencing and door closures to improve the school's security. The youngest pupils recognise leaders' efforts, noting that such measures 'stop burglars coming in'. Pupils are reassured by the procedures in place.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Many have experienced significant disruption to schooling and, often, long periods of absence in their previous placements. Typically, pupils make substantial strides in managing both their behaviour and intensifying their immersion in learning. One parent endorsed this view, saying: 'My son was previously in a mainstream school and really struggling. Now he is thriving and much better behaved and happier.'
- Leaders do not exclude pupils. When incidents occur, staff show skill and expertise, applying the school's techniques competently to dispel tension successfully. One pupil said: 'I have learned how to manage my behaviour and emotions.'
- Leaders have worked with conviction to ensure that, since opening, the school's systems and approaches to managing pupils' behaviour have improved significantly. Staff promote positive behaviour, modelling what is expected and offering timely praise and reinforcement. Records show that the number of serious incidents has declined significantly as a result.
- Transition is well considered both into school and, in some cases, onwards to a more appropriate setting as pupils' needs evolve. Leaders are alert to ensuring that the school always meets pupils' complex needs effectively.
- From time to time, pupils access alternative provision to ensure that their curriculum offer is personalised and appropriate. Pupils are always supported well off-site by

known staff from the school. Leaders monitor their attendance, behaviour and achievement closely. As a result, pupils are able to access a more diverse curriculum which expands their skills and knowledge appropriately.

- Attendance improves for many pupils, particularly when compared to their previous mainstream schooling pattern of attendance. Leaders have successfully reduced persistent absence.
- The school keeps detailed records of any incidents, including those that relate to bullying behaviour. The sanctions implemented are effective and appropriate, and pupils often improve their behaviour as a result. Nevertheless, if poor behaviour continues, leaders are not afraid, particularly with older pupils, to revoke privileges. As a result, pupils try even harder to meet leaders' exacting expectations.
- Leaders have invested significantly in a range of behaviour strategies. These equip staff well to meet the demands of some challenging behaviours, from time to time. A recent change in approach is proving positive as the number of incidents of the use of reasonable force has declined significantly. Staff are becoming more adept at using these approaches that focus on curbing poor behaviour before a significant incident takes hold.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan and a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder. Classes are organised by academic capabilities as well as giving consideration to other factors such as pupils' peer groups. Careful attention to each pupil's needs, including the disadvantaged, means pupils settle into their classes quickly and benefit from uniquely tailored learning programmes.
- Pupils' attainment is generally below that of other pupils nationally. From low starting points, pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, make good and sometimes rapid progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. However, pupils' progress in writing is not as strong.
- Leaders are adept at monitoring the progress of pupils with great attention to detail. Leaders consider pupils' progress by class, gender and group, including those who speak English as an additional language or are disadvantaged. All groups of pupils are performing well and making good progress across a multitude of areas. Leaders have successfully ensured that all pupils have an equal chance of success.
- In the early years and key stage 1, pupils are encouraged to share books and develop early reading skills. The youngest pupils enjoy stories and are able to gain enjoyment, joining in enthusiastically with sound effects, for example, such as when the lion roared. During the inspection, one pupil made a leap forward, independently turning pages and looking at the pictures for the first time. Older pupils are routinely introduced to new vocabulary and are developing the independent skills of looking up the meaning of words when uncertain.
- In key stage 3, pupils achieve well in a range of subjects. This year, pupils are deepening their learning in some subjects such as art and science as the school has opened specialist teaching rooms and is benefiting from the subject-specific expertise of adults.



- Key stage 3 pupils are also at the early stages of developing workplace skills through studying for The Prince's Trust Achieve Awards. Pupils are able to demonstrate useful skills such as managing feelings and reliability. A recent visit to Heathrow Airport also opened pupils' minds to the many possibilities that may lie ahead in the workplace.
- Leaders' dedication to ensuring that all pupils have an equal chance of success is striking. Additional funding and well-targeted adult support ensure that the majority of pupils continue on a steady upward trajectory of success. Parents are positive about their children's progress. As one commented: 'Our child is making excellent progress with his behaviour and social skills and we are also happy with his academic progress.'
- Very few pupils are disadvantaged and due to their high level of need it is not appropriate to consider their achievement in the context of national norms. However, leaders carefully consider how to use additional funding in order to provide further support alongside each pupil's education, health and care plan. Targets for individual pupils are broken down into small steps by skilful staff who have high expectations, but who understand the ever-changing needs of their pupils. Strategies are highly effective and make a real difference, enabling pupils to make significant progress.

## School details

Unique reference number	142066
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	10046634

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Free school special
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Sadd
Headteacher	Elizabeth Farnden
Telephone number	01628 202030
Website	<a href="http://www.forestbridgeschool.org.uk">www.forestbridgeschool.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@forestbridgeschool.org.uk">admin@forestbridgeschool.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school was opened in September 2015 by a group of parents of children who have autistic spectrum disorder. In agreement with the local authority, the school occupies the site of a previous primary school. This arrangement is temporary.
- There are currently 59 pupils on roll aged from four to 16 years. All pupils are supported by an education, health and care plan and all have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder. The majority of pupils are boys. The school works with nine placing local authorities although the majority of pupils are placed by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.
- The school has well-developed plans in place to secure a permanent site. It is anticipated that the school will relocate in September 2020.
- The school is registered as a special free school for 96 pupils aged four to 16 who have autistic spectrum disorder. When the school secures a permanent site, the school will be able to cater for more pupils than are currently on roll. There is a waiting list for

places.

- Currently, the school has one child in the early years. Consequently, the early years has not been reported on separately.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is below average.
- The school uses an alternative placement, Haybrook College.
- The majority of pupils are White British.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the head behaviour analyst and other leaders with significant responsibilities. The lead inspector also met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body and a founder parent governor. All governors also act as trustees.
- Inspectors visited 14 lessons or part-lessons, all with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher or head behaviour analyst. Inspectors also observed an assembly and pupils' breaktime.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in lessons, looked at work in pupils' books and discussed pupils' progress and attainment with leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally and also met with two groups of pupils, one comprising five pupils in primary and one group of five pupils in key stage 3, the secondary department.
- Parents' views were taken into account through the 25 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including four free-text comments.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the school's educational consultant who acts as a school improvement partner.
- Inspectors took account of 50 survey responses submitted by staff and the 27 responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised records and documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, leaders' monitoring activities and school improvement planning.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's recruitment and background checks on the suitability of all adults who work with pupils.

## Inspection team

Elizabeth Farr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Janis Rogers

Ofsted Inspector

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