

# The Forest High School

Causeway Road, Cinderford, Gloucestershire GL14 2AZ

## Inspection dates

11–12 July 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress across a range of subjects was below average in 2016 and 2017. Pupils currently in the school make much better progress, but their progress is not yet consistently good.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not make sufficient progress in key stage 4. Disadvantaged pupils in Years 7 and 8 learn more effectively and so attain well.
- Teaching is improving quickly, especially in English. Nevertheless, teachers do not routinely expect enough of the most able pupils, particularly in Year 9.
- Girls have responded well to improvements in teaching and make good progress in many subjects. However, boys' progress varies considerably.
- Some teaching is not responsive enough when pupils' misunderstandings become apparent.
- Behaviour requires improvement because a minority of pupils do not concentrate well in lessons. This hinders their progress.
- Some pupils' aspirations are too low. The careers advice and guidance programme has not raised their aspirations sufficiently.
- Senior leaders' strategy for using pupil premium funding has had insufficient effect on disadvantaged pupils' achievement.
- Middle leaders, many of whom work in very small departments, have not ensured a consistently high quality of teaching across the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school. The headteacher provides calm, determined leadership. He has secured pupils' and parents' confidence in the school and brought about improvements in the curriculum, teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Teachers assess pupils' attainment accurately and give feedback to pupils consistently in line with the school's policy.
- The governing body is effective in challenging senior leaders to improve the school further. It is a small group but with a wide set of skills.
- Senior leaders have raised the rate of pupils' attendance significantly this year. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen sharply.

## Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievements by:
  - ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make progress at least in line with the national averages for other pupils
  - raising teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils are capable of achieving, particularly in Year 9
  - providing teachers with further coaching so they are more skilled in varying their approach during lessons
  - ensuring that teaching engages boys and so raises their achievement closer to that of the girls.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - eliminating the residue of poor behaviour that remains, by helping those pupils who have difficulty living up to the school's expectations
  - developing the careers education and guidance programme so that it is more successful in raising pupils' aspirations.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - supporting middle leaders to secure consistently high-quality teaching in their areas of responsibility
  - ensuring that senior leaders' actions to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils are more targeted and effective.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The headteacher has brought about significant change over the past eighteen months. When he arrived, he provided much-needed stability following a period of turbulence in leadership. He has raised teachers' expectations and restored parental confidence.
- Senior leaders' strategy for the use of pupil premium funding has not had the impact on disadvantaged pupils' progress they had hoped for at the start of the year. The trust reviewed the strategy in recent weeks and has proposed an action plan to bring about improvements.
- Middle leaders have successfully established basic procedures in their departments, for example common assessment systems, good use of minimum expected grades and regular feedback to pupils. However, they have not yet ensured that teaching is consistently good enough to bring about rapid progress for all groups of pupils.
- The deputy headteacher provides strong leadership of teaching across the school. Staff value the professional training they are given and the growing opportunities to share expertise with other schools. Links with other schools play an increasing part in helping teachers to improve their practice. Newly qualified teachers are supported well.
- Senior leaders' monitoring of teachers' performance is rigorous. Teachers' training and coaching is closely linked to the performance management process, so that, when it is necessary, teachers receive additional challenge and support.
- Soon after his appointment, the headteacher made changes to the curriculum. This resulted in a narrower set of subjects being taught, but an increase in the proportion of lessons being taken by subject specialists. Consequently, although pupils have less choice, the quality of teaching has improved.
- Senior leaders provide strong messages to pupils about the values the school expects them to uphold. The personal, social and health education programme is well led and helps pupils to learn about tolerance, democracy and the rule of law.
- Senior leaders' strategy for careers advice and guidance is in line with statutory requirements. The proportion of pupils who secure places in education and training when they leave rose between 2016 and 2017. Even so, many pupils feel they do not have enough information about the possibilities open to them when they leave.
- Pupils are offered some extra-curricular activities. However, senior leaders acknowledge the range of activities for pupils is not yet wide enough.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well within lessons and in assemblies. Senior leaders have good links with organisations including the Gideons and Forest Churches. Pupils have a well-developed sense of responsibility. They regularly raise money for local charities such as the Forest Foodbank.
- Senior leaders ensure that funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is used effectively. They provide suitable help for Year 7 pupils who need to catch up with literacy and numeracy skills, by using additional funding for these pupils wisely.

- The trust has enabled the recruitment of staff to key posts. As a result, staff morale has risen, staff absence has fallen and fewer temporary teachers have been used this year. Pupils report that this has significantly improved teaching.
- Senior leaders', middle leaders' and teachers' skills are improving as a result of the partnership with Dene Magna School. This partnership is bringing new ideas and approaches into the school.
- The trust is quickly developing effective links between its schools. These draw upon the expertise in each, for example by bringing all staff together for training so they can share good practice. These links, and reviews of particular aspects of each school's work, are helping senior leaders at The Forest High School to develop their improvement strategy for the future.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors communicate effectively with parents and carers, and this has contributed to the rapid improvement in rates of pupils' attendance.
- Virtually all the parents who responded to the online Parent View survey believe the school is well led and managed. They are very satisfied with the quality of education provided and would recommend this school to other parents.

### **Governance of the school**

- The local governing body is a small group with a wide set of skills. New governors have brought significant experience and expertise to the group this year. Governors are well led and look to the future, continually asking for further improvement. For example, they have commissioned a review of governance.
- Governors understand the performance of the school well and they apply robust challenge to senior leaders to improve it. They are ambitious for the school and its pupils. For example, they have challenged senior leaders over disadvantaged pupils' slow progress this year. Governors ensure that additional funding for Year 7 pupils who need to catch up, and for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, is spent well.
- The trust provides effective oversight and support for the local governing body. It ensures that it meets its financial and safeguarding responsibilities. The trust has brokered further support for pupils' literacy development next year.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders make sure that all staff are checked when they are appointed to make sure they are suitable to work with children. They provide further training and updates that keep staff vigilant for any signs that pupils' welfare might be at risk.
- The school's record-keeping system is rigorous. It brings together information about pupils' welfare and safety into one place. Senior leaders act swiftly when information suggests a pupil might be at risk of harm. Senior leaders work closely with local support services and so pupils benefit from early help quickly at times of greatest need.
- Parents believe pupils are kept safe at school. They feel well informed by senior leaders

and they are confident that concerns are dealt with fairly by the headteacher and staff.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- Teaching is improving across the school, but it is not yet effective enough to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress in all year groups.
- Teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils in Year 9 can achieve are not sufficiently high, and so many of these pupils have not made the progress they are capable of.
- When pupils develop misconceptions in lessons, some teachers are not adept at varying their plans in response. As a result, some teaching does not engage pupils successfully and hold their attention, particularly boys.
- Teachers follow the school's assessment policy consistently. Pupils have a good understanding of how to improve their work and take the opportunities they are offered to make these improvements.
- Senior leaders have provided training and coaching for teachers on how to use questioning effectively. Teachers use questioning well. For example, in art, Year 8 pupils' ideas about scale, and the use of a pointer, were drawn out well by the teacher's questioning.
- Teaching is increasingly well planned because regular assessment of pupils' attainment is now providing teachers with accurate information that enables them to choose activities at the right level.
- English teaching is rapidly improving. Pupils are challenged to read complex and demanding books. Teachers in other subjects pay close attention to pupils' spelling and help them expand their vocabulary. Consequently, pupils' literacy skills are growing.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported well, because teachers and teaching assistants have the necessary skills and experience to help them. For example, teachers ensure that tasks for these pupils are given suitable structure. This helps them make better progress.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View believe that pupils are well taught at this school.

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare

### Requires improvement

#### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Most pupils take pride in their work and continually give their best effort in lessons. Some pupils, though, do not take enough care over their work and so their work is incomplete or not well presented.
- Senior leaders' efforts to raise pupils' aspirations have not yet had enough success. Too

many pupils have limited expectations of the type of career they might go into.

- Pupils feel safe at this school. They have confidence that their teachers will look after them and deal with any concerns they have. From the moment pupils cross the threshold of the school in the morning, they are met by positive, enthusiastic staff who model respectful relationships well. Pupils find staff open and approachable.
- Pupils are given good advice about how to avoid risks to their safety. For example, pupils recently watched a drama presentation that taught them how to avoid the risks of child sexual exploitation.
- Pupils say that bullying is not tolerated by senior leaders. On the rare occasions when it happens, they say senior leaders and other staff take it very seriously and deal with it swiftly.
- Pupils' understanding of their own emotional and mental well-being is developed well. Social education lessons are typically well taught. Pupils were proud of an essay they produced, which considered the effect of social media on children's mental health.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although most pupils have responded well to the school's raised expectations of pupils' behaviour, a minority of pupils still find it difficult to maintain their concentration in lessons. Occasionally, this leads to poor behaviour which holds back these pupils' learning.
- At break and lunchtime, pupils are well supervised and so the site is generally calm and orderly. When pupils need to be challenged by staff they respond positively and with good humour.
- Senior leaders' introduction of a new behaviour policy, that includes rewards for positive attitudes, has helped to bring about improvements in pupils' conduct. Incidents of poor behaviour have reduced over time and the rate of exclusions has fallen.
- The rate of pupils' attendance at school is rising quickly. Pupils recognise the improvement that is taking place. They want to come to school. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has fallen dramatically this year.
- Parents also recognise the improving quality of education and its effect on behaviour. One parent's comment was typical of many, 'As a parent with two children in school, I have to say I have seen a marked improvement in all aspects. The current management team have worked hard on bringing positive changes to the school, pupils have a pride in belonging, long may it continue.'

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress, measured across eight GCSE subjects, improved in 2017, but was still below the government's floor target. The school's assessment information shows that Year 11 pupils' progress this year has risen further, but is still not good enough.
- Last year, pupils' progress in mathematics was around the national average. Inspection evidence shows that most pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 have achieved well in

this subject.

- New leadership in English has resulted in Year 10 pupils making stronger progress than previously. More Year 10 pupils are currently on track to attain a GCSE grade 4 or better in both English and mathematics. However, improvements in teaching came too late for many Year 11 pupils. They have not been able to catch up after weaker teaching in the past.
- Pupils make strong progress in GCSE religious education, sociology and history, but their progress remains weak in French.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress in key stage 4 remains well below the progress of other pupils nationally. Better teaching is raising achievement across the school, but disadvantaged pupils in Years 10 and 11 still lag behind others.
- Boys' progress is not strong enough or consistent enough across the school. In too many subjects, there is a large difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
- The most able pupils in Years 7, 8 and 10 are being challenged to learn quickly and deeply. However, teaching is not as effective for the most able pupils in Year 9, and so these pupils' progress is limited.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are given good support. The majority of these pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Senior leaders' drive to improve pupils' literacy skills has been successful for many pupils. For example, in science, pupils are able to express their ideas effectively in longer pieces of writing.
- Pupils are increasingly gaining key qualifications which will give them a wider range of options when they leave school and go into the next stage of their education or training.

## School details

Unique reference number	138496
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10033096

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

Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	322
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Valerie Bragg
Headteacher	Paul Holroyd
Telephone number	01594 822 257
Website	<a href="http://www.foresthigh.org.uk">www.foresthigh.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@foresthigh.org.uk">info@foresthigh.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	13–14 May 2015

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the South Gloucestershire and Stroud Academy Trust. This comprises three schools.
- The chair of the local governing body was appointed in September 2016. Several new governors have been appointed since then. The governing body has commissioned a review of its work that will be carried out in the near future.
- The trust has recently carried out a review of the school's use of pupil premium funding to see how it can be used more effectively.
- The headteacher was appointed 18 months ago in January 2017.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding is above



average.

- The school does not use off-site alternative provision.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2017, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and middle leaders. The lead inspector held a meeting with the chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the head of school improvement from the trust and with the headteacher of Dene Magna School.
- Inspectors observed learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 across a range of subjects, some of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of pupils' written work from Years 7 to 10.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including minutes of governors' meetings, development plans, analysis of pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour logs, safeguarding documents and the school's review of its own performance.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4.
- Inspectors took account of 30 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 25 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Paul Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gill Hickling	Ofsted Inspector
Gary Lewis	Ofsted Inspector

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