

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Robert Hatherley
Headteacher
Forest Park School
Ringwood Road
Totton
Southampton
Hampshire
SO40 8DZ

Dear Mr Hatherley

Short inspection of Forest Park School

Following my visit to the school on 4 December 2018 with Ross Macdonald, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Under your impressive leadership, the entire school community shares your passion for ensuring that every pupil receives the best possible education in order to achieve their potential. You have created a purposeful learning environment that is vibrant and welcoming for pupils and families. Parents gave inspectors glowing testimonies about Forest Park School, referring to it as 'amazing', 'brilliant' and 'the best'.

You and your senior leaders are relentless in driving the school forward. You have addressed the areas for development from the previous inspection. Learning-support assistants are well trained and feel highly supported by leaders and teachers. You have placed a strong emphasis on empowering class teachers and their teams to develop their practice in order to create a highly individualised curriculum that is tailored to meet the pupils' varying individual needs. The curriculum offers a rich balance of learning functional skills, such as literacy, numeracy and communication, alongside life skills such as self-care and independence. The introduction of horticulture into the sixth-form programmes of

study offers further breadth to the curriculum. Staff are now looking for ways of accrediting this. It was evident to inspectors that all adults in the school work tirelessly to support pupils to achieve their challenging targets and develop their learning further. Pupils thoroughly enjoy being at school, showing great enthusiasm for their learning throughout the day.

You and senior leaders know all the pupils very well. You are determined in providing a very caring and creative environment for them. As one parent wrote: 'This is a wonderful school into which my son has settled immediately. From the headmaster down, every member of staff is kind, welcoming, friendly and knowledgeable of my child's needs. From the very first time of going to visit the school I was impressed by the sense of calmness, joy and the feeling of genuine care for the children.'

A thriving 'dads' group' provides additional support for families by ensuring that all parents and carers have access to appropriate resources that enhance their children's lives.

Being part of the local community is very important to you, your governors, and staff. To this end you seize every opportunity to involve pupils in the community, for instance in your work to promote sustainable travel, in particular finding ways to engage pupils with more profound and multiple learning difficulties. You are one of only a handful of schools in the country to achieve a silver award for demonstrating excellence in supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable transport. You have also worked with a local councillor to secure a sensory garden at the secondary site. Pupils created a special piece of art work to commemorate 100 years since the end of the First World War and attended a local Remembrance Day service, alongside groups of pupils from other local schools. This demonstrated great empathy from pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Governors provide strong support and challenge to the school. They are highly committed to ensuring that all groups of pupils make exemplary progress.

Forest Park School also provides support to a large number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in mainstream schools, by assisting their teachers in creating more-tailored resources and teaching approaches for these pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding permeates the school. You and your senior leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of a high quality. High levels of staff supervision for pupils arriving at school were noted by inspectors, with senior leaders always on hand to greet pupils with a warm welcome. Excellent collaboration between school staff and transport staff clearly guaranteed high levels of care for pupils on transitioning from transport to school.

You and your leadership team are relentless in your pursuit of a safe and happy environment where pupils can flourish. You are tenacious in securing the best

possible outcomes for those pupils who need extra support from other agencies.

Governors play a key role in monitoring the safeguarding practices across the school. All staff and governors receive regular updates to their training and are very aware of their responsibilities in safeguarding.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire were unanimous in stating that their children feel happy and safe at school and that the school responds very well to any concerns that they have for their children. Those speaking to inspectors at the morning drop-off also agreed that their children are happy at school and felt that their children are well looked after.

One parent wrote: 'Staff go above and beyond to make sure that our child can access everything he needs, and to make him feel safe with having his own space within class when he gets overwhelmed. I have a great relationship with his class teacher and learning support assistants, with great communication between us.' Another parent wrote: 'The school provides a calm and safe environment and our son is happy to go to school.'

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed three key lines of enquiry. Inspectors focused on the effectiveness of leaders' actions to ensure that most-able pupils are challenged in order to extend their skills. The team also looked at how successfully leaders have developed the skills of teaching assistants to meet the needs of every pupil. Lastly, we focused on seeing how leaders have diminished any gaps in progress and achievement between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils.
- In all lessons visited by inspectors, adults provided high levels of support, care and guidance, and pupils were engaged in their learning tasks. All staff were fully aware of the needs, and the emerging needs, of all the young people in the class and were an integral part of their learning experiences. Teachers and teaching assistants tailor their instructions and resources to meet the individual needs of pupils. They offer the most appropriate support and challenge in order that pupils learn in the most effective way and achieve the very challenging targets set for them.
- Attendance at school is very high. There are very clear systems in place to deal with any absences, which usually only occur for medical reasons. Leaders' drive to improve attendance has ensured that it is almost in line with national averages and certainly above average for special schools. Persistent absence has dropped dramatically this year, with the school's family support worker being instrumental in achieving this.
- Leaders regularly scrutinise data, ensuring that progress and achievement are monitored thoroughly. Disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress as non-disadvantaged pupils. Thus, where individuals or groups of pupils are recognised as not making the progress that leaders believe they can, then

appropriate additional plans are put in place to remedy this.

- Staff have developed their own bespoke assessment app, which they use very effectively to build an accurate picture of pupils' progress. Leaders are passionate about finding innovative ways of capturing and measuring progress and attainment. They constantly use the latest up-to-date knowledge of new nationally recognised systems of measuring progress in order to create a sound assessment package. Leaders work closely with leaders from several other similar schools in order to refine their system and moderate their work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further embed the assessment system by extending it to other areas of the pupils' profiles
- they strengthen the programme of study in the sixth form by extending accreditation to include horticulture.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hampshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Edwards
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, the team held a number of meetings with you and other senior leaders. You and your senior leaders accompanied inspectors on a series of short visits to all classes. The inspection team held discussions with members of staff and leaders about safeguarding, staff training and support, how you remove barriers to learning, and how you measure pupils' progress. Meetings were also held with the chair of the governing body and five other governors, and a representative of the local authority. A meeting was also held with a group of three pupils.

The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the improvement plan, attendance data, records of pupils' progress and behaviour and evidence of records to keep pupils safe. Inspectors also considered the 30 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 34 responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff.