

# Inspection of The Forest School

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

Inspection dates: 29 June, and 6 and 7 July 2021

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils at The Forest School understand that learning is important. They apply themselves to their work, showing great tenacity. Teachers have high expectations of what each pupil should achieve. They make sure that pupils understand and remember what they learn.

Pupils enjoy the range of subjects that are on offer to them. Leaders plan to widen the selection further next year. Pupils like the three 100-minute lessons they have every day. They view the extended lessons as an opportunity to study in more depth.

Overall, pupils behave very well in the school. They say that there is an atmosphere of mutual respect and support. All pupils feel safe. Bullying seldom happens. However, if it does, pupils trust staff to deal with any issues that arise. They appreciate very much the support they receive from their teachers. Pupils, in turn, respect the rules of the school.

Parents are very complimentary about what the school provides for their children. They value the ambition and care that staff have for their pupils. One parent wrote, 'Since my son joined the school, he has enjoyed every moment. The teachers seem to really want our children to succeed.' This is typical of parents' opinions about the school.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders have made significant improvements to the content of the curriculum. Subject leaders have recast their planning thoroughly. There is a clear emphasis on what they want pupils to learn. Teachers consistently make sure that pupils develop the necessary skills well. However, on occasions, teachers are not precise enough about the specific knowledge they wish their pupils to learn.

Teachers insist that pupils recall previous learning to build on new knowledge. For instance, in a sixth-form English lesson the teacher asked her pupils to describe the key features of Romantic poetry. They did this readily. Pupils then used this knowledge to apply to the Keats sonnet they were studying. This example of consolidating knowledge is typical of the learning at The Forest School.

Teachers check pupils' learning carefully. This happens through discussions in class and through marking of work. Teachers give precise and helpful feedback about what pupils need to improve.

Another strong aspect of the curriculum at the school is the unequivocal focus on reading. At every opportunity, teachers encourage pupils to read. Pupils routinely read aloud during lessons. Teachers go over new vocabulary systematically in order

to ensure that pupils understand their meaning. Pupils use subject-specific words with confidence.

Leaders' ambitions for pupils are high. They have made the decision to ensure that more pupils take up the full range of EBacc subjects at GCSE. They have also reviewed key stage 3 to offer a broader and deeper curriculum from next year.

The school is firmly focused on all pupils succeeding. There is a concerted drive to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged. Teachers' planning centres on these pupils. Their progress is meticulously tracked. Leaders concentrate on removing any barriers to learning. This approach has successfully supported pupils' progress.

Leaders have been equally focused on improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Pupils say that teachers do not tolerate disruption to learning. Learning in lessons is routinely calm and purposeful. Pupils respect and support each other in their learning. Leaders have been successful too in raising levels of attendance. Current attendance figures are above the usual national average. Sixth-form attendance is also high. Leaders have tracked carefully the destinations of Year 11 and Year 13 and provided support to pupils where needed.

The personal development of pupils is carefully considered. The school's ASPIRE ethos runs through all aspects of the work on character development. A wide range of clubs and activities run normally. Pupils also receive a planned personal and social education programme. Teachers are not afraid to tackle topical and difficult issues. Pupils appreciate the opportunities for discussion. They are mature and reflective in their responses.

Staff recognise and appreciate the rapid improvements leaders have made at the school. The headteacher has set out a clear vision and direction. Nearly all staff believe that leaders consider their well-being and workload carefully. Trustees check on how the school is progressing and evaluate the impact on staff. Everyone enjoys working at the school. Staff strive to offer what is best for their pupils.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have robust and appropriate systems in place for safeguarding. Careful checks are carried out on people working at the school. Staff are knowledgeable about what may indicate a safeguarding concern about a pupil. They are clear about how to pass on any worries. Leaders have a strong awareness of the safeguarding threats specific to their locality. They take proactive action to minimise any risks.

Pupils say they feel safe and happy at the school although some sixth formers would like further mental health support.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders recognised that the key stage 3 curriculum was not sufficiently broad. It is clear that they have taken action to broaden the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 as well as ensure that higher numbers of pupils take the EBacc route from next year. For this reason, the transition arrangement has been applied in this case.
- Teachers have recast their subject plans to focus very clearly and helpfully on what pupils should learn and when. At present, these plans concentrate more on the skills pupils should acquire than on the component knowledge they need to learn. While many teachers are covering the necessary content, a more systematic approach is required to ensure that all pupils build even more securely on their knowledge.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school [here](#).

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139853
<b>Local authority</b>	Wokingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10184386
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	586
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	99
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Anna McMenamin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Shirley Austin
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.forest.wokingham.sch.uk">www.forest.wokingham.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30 March 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- At the time of the inspection, Year 11 and Year 13 had formally left the school, having completed their courses. However, some Year 11 pupils were attending their sixth-form induction lessons during the inspection.

## Information about this inspection

This inspection began on 29 June 2021 as a monitoring inspection under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005. Having found that the school performance appeared to be improving, the inspection was deemed to be under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. As a section 5 inspection requires more inspector time to complete than a monitoring inspection, we returned on 6 and 7 July to complete the full inspection.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors reviewed the school’s safeguarding arrangements. They looked at relevant documentation, staff recruitment checks and training. They also considered how well adults in the school act on emerging concerns about pupil welfare.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff to gather their views. They considered 178 responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, including 136 free-text responses. Inspectors also took account of the 55 responses to the survey for staff. In addition to speaking directly to pupils, they also considered the school’s own pupils’ questionnaires.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders and with trustees, including the chair of the trustee board. They also spoke with two external advisers to the school.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history and geography. This involved talking with senior leaders and class teachers about how these subjects are delivered. Inspectors then visited a range of lessons to see this in action, talked to pupils about what they had learned and looked at their work.

## Inspection team

Yasmin Maskatiya, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Shaun Jarvis

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Louise Walker

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Matthew Haynes

Her Majesty’s Inspector (29 June 2021)

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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