

Inspection of Forest Hall School

Forest Hall Road, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex CM24 8TZ

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 November 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that they are happy to come to Forest Hall School. They say it 'feels like a family'. Pupils feel safe and know who to talk to if they have concerns. Staff deal with any issues in a timely way. Pupils say that bullying, when it happens, is dealt with properly.

Pupils understand the importance of the school community. They are proud to be a member of their school house. Pupils accept their differences and are polite and friendly. They are confident because adults listen to them and respect their views.

Pupils understand leaders' high expectations of their behaviour. Pupils work hard and behave well around the school. They want to learn and do well because they experience high-quality teaching. Pupils receive extra support if they need it.

Pupils enjoy many activities outside lessons, both sporting and creative. Assemblies and tutorials help them learn about the wider world. Pupils join in fundraising events, like the school's Greek orphanage appeal. These opportunities help pupils to develop the skills they will need as adults.

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

Leaders have created a well-considered curriculum. Curriculum plans identify the important knowledge that pupils need to know, and build on what they have already learned. For example, plans across all subjects highlight ways to improve pupils' vocabulary and their reading. As a result, pupils know more and remember more over time.

Most teachers have good subject knowledge and present information clearly. In lessons, teachers help pupils to go over their past learning before introducing them to new content. Teachers check what pupils know and can do. For example, teachers ask questions which assess pupils' understanding. Despite these strengths, a small number of teachers are not confident in delivering the curriculum. Because of this, pupils sometimes lose concentration and do not achieve as well as they should.

The curriculum is broad. For instance, in key stage 3, pupils study a wide range of subjects. In key stage 4, leaders encourage all pupils to be ambitious in their subject choices.

Leaders ensure pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have the same access to the curriculum as their peers. This includes those who spend time in the dyslexia support unit or in nurture groups. Staff are well trained to support pupils with SEND. For example, when they need it, these pupils get skilled help to improve their reading. Because of this, pupils with SEND achieve well. They are active and successful participants in the school community.

Leaders support pupils in their personal development effectively. The curriculum focuses on developing character and values, and teaches pupils resilience. The careers programme helps pupils to get ready for their next steps in education or training. Many pupils develop and stretch their interests and talents through school clubs.

The trust and the governing body challenge leaders to ensure that pupils do well. Governors work closely with leaders to show consideration for staff well-being and workload. The trust makes sure that leaders have the support they need to further improve the school. Staff appreciate the support and training they receive through the trust.

Most parents are very positive about their child's experiences, but some raise concerns about the way the school communicates with them. Some parents say they do not always understand how well their child is doing or what support they are getting from the school. Communication with parents is not as timely as it should be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, staff and governors are well trained in keeping pupils safe and understand their responsibilities. Leaders take prompt action to protect and support pupils. They work closely with external agencies.

Leaders understand the local and national risks that might affect their pupils. They have ensured that the curriculum helps pupils to understand these risks and learn how to avoid them.

The trust has a close oversight of safeguarding. Governors are watchful in their monitoring of leaders' safeguarding of pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not teach the curriculum as well as they should. Because of this, pupils sometimes become distracted and lose concentration. Leaders need to ensure all teachers are trained to deliver the curriculum as intended.
- A small number of parents do not feel that leaders and staff communicate as well as they could. As a result, these parents feel frustrated and lack an understanding of what leaders are doing to support their children. Leaders should improve their communication with parents who raise concerns, and keep them well informed about their ongoing actions.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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

Unique reference number	141328
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10200519
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	483
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Drayton
Headteacher	Matt Carter
Website	foresthallschool.org
Date of previous inspection	17 and 18 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Burnt Mill Academy Trust (BMAT).
- The headteacher has been in post since January 2021.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is higher than the national average, including pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
- The school runs a dyslexia support unit. Pupils access some lessons in the unit and the majority of lessons in the mainstream school.
- The school uses a registered alternative provider which is part of the trust.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- During this inspection, inspectors held meetings with the chief executive officer of the trust, and subject, SEND and safeguarding leaders for the trust. They also met with governors, the executive headteacher, the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders. Inspectors scrutinised the single central record.

- Inspectors did deep dives in English, science, modern foreign languages, history and personal, social and health education as part of this inspection. Inspectors spoke to subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at a range of pupils' work and met with teachers and pupils for these subjects.
- In addition to the deep dives, inspectors looked at provision in other subjects. They visited the reading programmes taking place and listened to pupils read to another adult or pupil.
- Inspectors visited the dyslexia support unit. They visited nurture group lessons for some pupils in Years 7 and 8.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils, including single-sex groups of pupils, about their experiences of school life and what it is like to be a pupil at Forest Hall School. They also observed behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents, including those related to curriculum planning and development, safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, exclusions and the school's development plan. They also looked at minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors talked to staff, including some newly qualified teachers, about their workload. They also talked to them about the amount and quality of training and support they receive from leaders.
- Inspectors considered the 98 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the 97 free-text comments from parents. Inspectors also considered an email from a parent.

Inspection team

Kathryn Herlock, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jason Carey	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Hood	Ofsted Inspector

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