

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Forest Way School

Warren Hills Road, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 4UU

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Inspection dates:

7 and 8 December 2021

## **Outcome**

Forest Way School continues to be an outstanding school.

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

Children and young people flourish at Forest Way. Leaders and staff put no limits on what they wish pupils to achieve. This is captured in the school's motto: 'Thrive at Forest Way'. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy lessons, especially mathematics, cooking, physical education and English. They described the staff as 'kind, friendly and lovely'.

Pupils' behaviour, in lessons and during social times, is impressive. There is an ethos of respect and courtesy throughout the school. Pupils who sometimes struggle to manage their behaviour receive well-planned support. Staff and parents and carers agree that pupils' behaviour is outstanding.

Pupils know that bullying is wrong. They say that they feel safe because 'your friends will always have your back'. They know to tell an adult if they have any worries. They know staff will resolve any bullying, should it happen.

There is a strong history of sporting achievement at Forest Way. Pupils are proud of the many trophies and awards they have gained. For example, in athletics, pupils have won awards at national level for the six years prior to the pandemic.

Leaders and staff provide clubs and activities to cater for a wide range of interests. Pupils especially enjoy 'ultimate frisbee' and drama. Outdoor activities are a regular and popular feature of the curriculum, in keeping with the school's woodland theme.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that sets out clearly and precisely the knowledge and skills pupils should gain, and when. The information about the curriculum on the school's website is very helpful for parents. It is set out in the form of a visual road map, showing pupils' 'learning journey' from the early years to post-16 and destinations beyond. This progressive journey is mirrored in all subjects and areas of the curriculum. Highly detailed

plans underpin the curriculum overview. This leaves the reader in no doubt that the school's curriculum is exceptionally well sequenced.

Leaders work in teams to oversee specific aspects of the curriculum. They have a united ambition for what they wish pupils of all ages to achieve. Leaders are constantly refining the curriculum to ensure that it stays relevant to pupils' needs. For example, in mathematics, leaders have redesigned aspects of the curriculum to enable higher attainers to achieve well. As a result, in 2021, pupils entered and passed functional skills examinations for the first time. Some took up college places earlier than they may otherwise have done.

There is a strong focus on preparing pupils for their next steps and for adulthood. Leaders and staff are highly ambitious for each pupil to succeed. The post-16 curriculum supports students to embark on one of four pathways: sensory, life choices, life skills and vocational. Leaders and staff provide a rich variety of options for students to explore. For example, some take part in the National Citizenship Service. Others focus on independent living, health or employment.

Leaders prioritise communication and reading. They told inspectors that the school library is 'the heart of the school'. There is a systematic approach to teaching reading. Children in the early years, and pupils in key stage 1, learn through daily phonics sessions. Well-trained staff follow a consistent approach as they teach the sessions. Pupils read from books that match their phonics knowledge. Some pupils learn to communicate by other means, such as Makaton signing or by use of communication devices. They are all developing as confident readers and communicators.

Staff regularly assess the impact of the curriculum. They measure progress by means of pupils' independence, achievement, communication, safety and happiness. This means that staff have a well-rounded view of what pupils can remember and do, over time. Leaders use this information to plan the next steps for each pupil.

Pupils who have highly complex needs follow a sensory curriculum. Leaders have ensured that this curriculum is as ambitious as other curriculum areas. The sensory curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. Pupils who follow this curriculum access a range of themes to develop their communication and interaction skills. Pupils' learning, and their physical, social and emotional needs are very well supported.

Pupils in 'The Den' follow an ambitious curriculum. It is based on the national curriculum and specific targets from their education, health and care plans. Pupils spoke about how well they have settled in at The Den. During a lesson visit, pupils showed excellent focus and attention as they accurately read instructions and weighed ingredients for a gingerbread baking activity.

Leaders and staff promote pupils' personal development exceptionally well. Pupils' highly positive attitudes to their education are a credit to the school. The work to promote tolerance and celebrate differences is especially strong. Staff encourage pupils to 'be proud of who you are' and to appreciate different family models. Positive relationships

across all areas of the school enable pupils to thrive. This includes the quality of care provided in the early years foundation stage.

Governors provide strong support and challenge for the school. They make sure to discuss leaders' and staff workload and well-being regularly. Governors understand the importance of providing high-quality training for staff. They believe this has a positive impact on staff confidence and well-being. Staff spoke positively about how they support one another. They say that leaders are approachable and care about their well-being.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff understand the needs of pupils extremely well. As a result, they quickly identify any concerns, however small. There is a strict 15-minute window within which all concerns must be reported. Records reflect this and show the prompt actions leaders take. Leaders are persistent when seeking external support for families.

Through the curriculum, leaders raise pupils' awareness of sexual harassment and online abuse, in an age-appropriate way. Leaders record such instances separately, to highlight any occurrences and resulting actions. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said they feel safe at school. They feel well supported by staff, and by their friends.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Forest Way School, to be outstanding in November 2010.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137905
<b>Local authority</b>	Leicestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10199753
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	255
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	49
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	James Shanley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gail Seaton
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.forestway.leics.sch.uk">www.forestway.leics.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11 May 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in September 2016.
- During 2019/20, the Forest Lodge modular classroom was built, providing increased capacity for 13 pupils.
- The Den communication and interaction resource base was opened in September 2020. This offers places for up to 12 primary-age pupils as part of the local authority high needs block strategy.
- In July 2021, the renovation of the tennis courts into a multi-purpose AstroTurf sports area was completed.
- The school works in partnership with 30 other schools as part of the Forest Way Alliance.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and a wide range of staff. The lead inspector met with a group of governors from the trust board, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these curriculum areas: reading, mathematics and the post-16 curriculum. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The lead inspector also looked at curriculum plans, spoke to leaders and visited lessons in other areas of the school, including The Den and the provision for pupils with complex needs.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding by reviewing the school's record of pre-employment checks and holding discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Responses to Ofsted's survey for staff were also reviewed.

## Inspection team

Christine Watkins, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Edwards

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
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