

Inspection of a good school: The Forest School

Comptons Lane, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 5NT

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 January 2022

Outcome

The Forest School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are respectful, polite and courteous towards each other. They are hospitable towards visitors and proud of their school. The environment is welcoming and benefits from ongoing refurbishment. Pupils appreciate the changes that have taken place since the arrival of the headteacher.

Pupils say that they feel happy and safe. Bullying is rare. Any occurrences are dealt with quickly and effectively. The curriculum provides good support for pupils' welfare through the caring pastoral system. The school has been accredited for its work on promoting positive mental health and well-being.

Pupils show positive attitudes to their learning. Teachers have an acute awareness of pupils' individual interests and talents. The careers programme ensures that pupils are well prepared. The number of pupils proceeding to post-16 education is very high. Pupils spoken to had high aspirations for their future as 'confident, articulate and caring adults'.

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Senior leaders regularly engage with pupils and staff. As a result, they have a deep understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. One parent told us that the headteacher, 'leads with care and humour, fostering a feeling of community and engagement'.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum to inspire and enthuse pupils. The intent of the curriculum is clear, and the content is ambitious and well considered. The schemes of work are well written. The content is carefully ordered so that work builds well on that done previously.

The curriculum has been finely crafted to provide challenge and interest while meeting national curriculum requirements. Leaders have successfully increased the number of

pupils studying a modern foreign language. The proportion of pupils who follow the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects is increasing.

Literacy and oracy are supported well across the curriculum. The school has some useful programmes in place to develop pupils' lifelong love of reading. Pupils who struggle to read receive appropriate support, including the accelerated reading scheme and paired reading.

The school has established strong curriculum links with partner primary schools. This ensures continuity between key stage 2 and key stage 3. Transitions are managed very well and are much appreciated by parents and carers and pupils. The school's change in status to include girls has been well managed. The girls told us that they enjoy the school. They say that help is always available and 'the teachers are nice'.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge, as evidenced through their confident exposition in the classroom. They readily anticipate and address common errors and misconceptions. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare and pupils are quick to follow instructions.

Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported effectively to access the same curriculum as other pupils. Teachers make suitable adjustments, and teaching assistants support and encourage pupils. These pupils enjoy school and are ambitious for the future.

The school provides a range of enrichment activities, including an art club, further mathematics and masterclasses in English. Leaders have drawn up plans to improve provision for the most able pupils still further. However, there is more to do to ensure that this planning is fully implemented, especially in key stage 3.

The school's ethos and curriculum reflect and promote British values. Social skills and cultural understanding are actively promoted through assemblies and tutorials. Literacy and subject-specific vocabulary are strongly supported across the curriculum. Assessment is regular and used well to identify gaps, address shortfalls and reshape what is taught.

Leaders are ambitious, and determined to improve pupils' learning further. Governors have a secure understanding of the school. Leaders and governors actively support staff workloads, although some staff still feel under pressure. Regardless, most said that they were proud to be members of staff and enjoyed working at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture of safeguarding across the school is very strong. Staff are watchful and understand the procedures to follow if they have any concerns. Checks on adults' eligibility to work with children are thorough and meet requirements.

Leaders manage safer recruitment practices and any allegations about staff appropriately. Safeguarding leaders are very knowledgeable and pursue matters with considerable determination, especially when challenging the local authority.

Pupils learn how to stay safe, including when online and in the wider community. They receive age-appropriate lessons on issues around consent and sexual harassment. Pupils trust the adults in the school and know how to get help if they need it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Senior leaders' intent to boost provision for the most able pupils has not yet been fully implemented, particularly in key stage 3. Leaders do not yet have a sufficiently clear oversight of how well these pupils perform. Better systems to coordinate, monitor and refine the school's provision for the most able pupils are needed to address this.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2017.

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	126065
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10211545
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,048
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Cliff Purvis
Headteacher	Ian Straw
Website	www.theforestschool.com
Date of previous inspection	7 to 9 March 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Forest School is an average-sized 11–16 secondary school. The school became co-educational and admitted its first cohort of girls in September 2021.
- There are 30 pupils who attend courses off site at three registered education providers. The majority of these pupils are following one-day vocational courses covering construction, horticulture and motor vehicle maintenance.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject

leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders as well as other staff in the school. They reviewed the school's policies, practices and procedures for safeguarding and supporting pupils' health, welfare and well-being.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum documents, school policies and the single central record. The lead inspector met with governors and spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered 106 responses to Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire and 75 written responses from parents. They reviewed the survey responses from 66 staff. No pupil surveys were completed, but inspectors considered the responses to the school's own pupil surveys and talked to pupils from across the school.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sue Bzikot

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