

Inspection of Forest Park School

Ringwood Road, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire SO40 8DZ

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
------------------------------	-------------

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have high expectations. They have created a happy, nurturing environment where 'children come first'. Relationships between staff and pupils are trusting and caring. Pupils are safe and feel safe. There is very occasional bullying, but staff deal with it straightaway. One pupil said, 'Our school entrance has magic doors. As soon as you walk in, you know that you belong here because everyone loves you for just who you are.'

Pupils look forward to walks in the New Forest, where they learn about local habitats. They plant flowers to attract bees and encourage wildlife in the area. Older pupils develop their entrepreneurial skills by making and selling ornaments to fund their work in the school allotment. They cook healthy, tasty meals with the vegetables and salads that they grow.

Pupils are actively involved in the life of the school community. For instance, they take part in the Remembrance Day service in the town and showcase their singing talents. Pupils regularly collect donations for the local food bank and charities they support. They enjoy visits from Southampton Football Club and trips to Winchester Cathedral. Pupils pursue their creative flair by learning to play a wide range of musical instruments.

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

Leaders and governors are united in their vision for pupils to fulfil their potential and succeed during their time at Forest Park. Leaders are determined to equip pupils with positive communication strategies and greater independence. Staff are very proud to work at the school. They feel greatly supported by leaders and governors in managing their workload. Governors are ambitious for pupils' academic and social success. They visit the school regularly and provide challenge and support in equal measure. Governors know well what needs to continue in order to improve the quality of education.

Pupils' personal development is top class. Across the curriculum, leaders and staff expertly develop pupils' understanding of the world they inhabit. For example, pupils learn about democracy by making choices about their daily routines and activities. They elect their peers to the school council and work with leaders to choose equipment for their playground. Pupils work with a wide range of visitors to learn about the rule of law. For instance, through visits from the police, fire service and local councillors. Pupils are raising awareness in the community on issues such as plastic pollution. They learn about festivals from different cultures and find out about other religions. Pupils understand that all people should be treated equally. They are extremely well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders are very focused on preparing pupils for their next steps after leaving Forest Park. This includes students in the sixth form, who often complete bespoke life skills

courses leading to a meaningful qualification. Leaders place a strong focus on improving pupils' communication skills. Staff receive effective guidance from specialists such as speech and language therapists. They use high-quality resources such as visual aids, symbols and alternative communication tools. Pupils also learn Makaton. Consequently, pupils' communication skills improve dramatically from their different starting points.

Reading runs seamlessly through the curriculum. Across all phases, pupils enjoy listening to the wide range of exciting books and poetry that staff read. Children in early years show their appreciation of the stories and songs by clapping, nodding and role playing. Staff use their expert training to help all pupils to learn to read well. The books pupils read help them practise the sounds they learn. As one Year 5 pupil said, 'I like phonics because once we know how to read, we can find out about lots of interesting new things.'

Overall, the curriculum is well constructed. This means that in most subjects and across all phases, leaders have identified the order in which pupils should learn the essential knowledge and vocabulary. Based on their education, health and care (EHC) plan targets and interests, pupils follow a personalised curriculum pathway. This includes students in the sixth form. A multi-disciplinary therapy team is always on hand to ensure that pupils get the help they need to access learning successfully. A number of specialist therapies blend effectively into the curriculum. However, in some subjects, the curriculum does not provide teachers with clear information on the order in which the important ideas should be taught. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders are addressing this.

Pupils are polite, courteous and welcoming. Their good behaviour means that the school is a purposeful and pleasant place. Staff skilfully support pupils to regulate their emotions and learn to make positive choices. As a result, pupils manage their own behaviour increasingly well. Pupils look forward to lessons, which some describe as 'fun and epic'. Children in early years are curious about the world around them. They explore their ideas in the well-organised environment. Children learn to take turns and share resources with others.

Leaders recognise that despite their rigorous actions, there are still a number of pupils who are not attending school regularly and often enough. These pupils miss out on important learning and experiences.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding on both sites. Staff are well trained and there are robust processes for reporting concerns. They know pupils well and recognise when they are vulnerable. When there are concerns about pupils, staff deal with these swiftly and appropriately. Leaders work effectively with external partners. They make suitable checks to ensure that all staff are

suitable to work with pupils. Safeguarding is taught expertly through the curriculum. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, the curriculum does not set out what pupils should learn, or the order in which things should be taught. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders need to continue their work to ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is coherently planned and teachers' subject knowledge in these subjects is effective.
- Despite leaders' rigorous efforts to improve attendance, a small proportion of pupils do not attend school as often as they should. Therefore, they do not learn as well as they could, and they miss out on important experiences. Leaders should continue their work to improve the attendance of all pupils.

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.

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	135823
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10200902
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	140
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	12
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Smith
Headteacher	Rob Hatherley
Website	www.forestpark.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties. All pupils have severe communication difficulties, and many also have complex medical needs. Most pupils also have additional severe and complex needs, including a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school is based on two sites that are located close to each other. Primary-aged pupils attend the Ringwood Road site, SO40 8DZ. Secondary-aged pupils attend the Commercial Road site, SO40 3AF.
- Most pupils are referred to the school by Hampshire local authority, with a few from two other adjacent authorities. The vast majority of pupils travel to school through local authority transport arrangements.

- 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 education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school is not currently using any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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 met with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with five governors, including the chair. She spoke on the telephone with two care home managers, the virtual school headteacher and met with an officer from Hampshire local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and some pupils informally, including during social times.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and the additional free-text responses.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Louise Ling

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022