

Inspection of a good school: Foundry College

Budges Gardens, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1PX

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

Outcome

Foundry College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils join the school having experienced a period of disrupted education. The school enables pupils to make a fresh start and reconnect with education. Pupils develop new-found confidence and self-esteem. They begin to see a more positive, brighter future ahead of them. Some parents comment on the way that the school has transformed their children's lives. One parent described the school as 'extraordinary'.

Pupils enjoy the calm atmosphere, small classes and consistent routines. They feel safe in school and know that staff really care about them. Pupils value the trusting, warm relationships that staff forge with them. Some continue to need much support to regulate their behaviour and emotions. Staff manage this very well. They are patient and skilled at de-escalating any rising tensions. Pupils learn that 'every day is a new day' and are helped to move forward positively from any incidents. Bullying is not a concern, and leaders swiftly follow up any issues.

Leaders and staff are determined to engineer and sustain success for all pupils. Their aspirations are seen in older pupils' positive outcomes and successful pathways into further education, training or employment.

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

Leaders have created a personalised curriculum built around pupils' needs. This is based on their strong understanding of pupils' starting points. Staff work with a wide multidisciplinary team to find the best 'pathway' for each pupil and ensure that they re-engage with education as quickly as possible. For many pupils, the journey to get back on track takes time. However, the good support that pupils receive enables some of them to return to mainstream or specialist settings quickly and successfully.

Pupils learn a range of subjects around the 'non-negotiables' of English, mathematics and personal, social and health education (PSHE). In key stage 4, the curriculum is increasingly shaped around qualification pathways and pupils' career aspirations. Pupils benefit from careers guidance and are supported to develop individual plans. They work towards a range of appropriate qualifications, including in vocational subjects, that align to their planned routes to future education or employment.

English is given suitable priority, and reading, writing and oracy are threaded through different subjects. Some older pupils study English literature, enabling them to complete in-depth studies of significant texts. However, younger pupils do not have enough opportunity to read for enjoyment and learn from high-quality texts. As a result, they are not gaining sufficient breadth of reading. This also limits pupils' opportunity to acquire new vocabulary, develop an understanding of various genres and learn about different authors.

Staff gain pupils' trust, find out their interests and help them to experience success. They are highly sensitive to pupils' emotions, anxieties and readiness to learn. They know when they can push ahead with new learning and when they need to step back. Provision is reviewed every six weeks. Staff involve parents, pupils and other professionals in this process, ensuring that things are working as intended and adapting provision as needed. High staff ratios mean that pupils get lots of individual support. This helps staff to assess what pupils know and address gaps in their learning. They prioritise the most important content pupils need to learn and adapt learning activities to reflect their needs and interests.

Staff organise some off-site visits to support pupils' wider development, although not all pupils are willing to take up what is offered. They encourage pupils to take part in special events in support of their chosen charity. However, leaders have not ensured that pupils have enough opportunity to engage meaningfully in social and extra-curricular activities.

Staff are proud to work at the school and enjoy being part of the Foundry team. The end-of-day briefings enable staff to talk about how the day has gone, share successes and discuss any concerns. Members of the school's management committee work closely with the headteacher. They keep appropriate oversight of key aspects of the school's work, including safeguarding.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff know the additional vulnerabilities that pupils have because of their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There is a strong culture of vigilance. Any concerns are acted on without delay. Leaders work closely with many other professionals and agencies to provide support to pupils and their families.

Pupils learn how to keep safe, including when online. They are taught about healthy relationships and how to recognise when behaviour may be coercive. Pupils learn about the risks associated with alcohol and drug use and how to seek help if needed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Younger pupils do not have enough opportunity to listen to or read high-quality texts. This limits their potential to develop a love of reading, acquire new vocabulary and learn about different genres and literary styles. Leaders need to strengthen this aspect of the school's reading curriculum and ensure that pupils are guided to select and enjoy a wide range of high-quality literature.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to mix socially. Typically, breaktimes are very short and do not provide sufficient time for pupils to engage meaningfully in social activities. This limits pupils' social development and opportunities for them to take part in activities outside of the classroom or connect with and forge friendships with other pupils. Leaders need to review their current arrangements and provide more meaningful, regular opportunities for pupils to mix socially with their peers.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2013.

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	101493
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	10256552
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Headteacher	Iain Thomas
Website	www.foundry.wokingham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils who have been permanently excluded from a mainstream or special school or are at risk of being permanently excluded. In addition, the school provides education for pupils who are unable to attend school because of medical and mental health needs which interrupt their access to full-time education in school. This includes home-based tuition for pupils whose medical conditions prevent them from attending school. Foundry College also provides outreach support to other schools in Wokingham.
- Currently, there are no early years or key stage 1 pupils at the school. There are two pupils in key stage 2 and six pupils in key stage 3. The majority of pupils are in Years 10 and 11. Many pupils are dual registered with the schools that have commissioned alternative provision at Foundry College.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant leadership and staffing changes. The current headteacher took up post as acting headteacher in January 2021. This post was made substantive in September 2021.
- The school currently uses four unregistered alternative providers; seven pupils make use of this provision. A small number of pupils receive part of their education at alternative sites for short periods each week.

- All pupils have special educational needs related to their social, emotional and mental health needs. Approximately a third of pupils have education, health and care plans.
- The local authority has put in place a management committee, which fulfils the strategic functions of a local governing body.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and PSHE. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, read samples of pupils' work and talked with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector met with seven members of the management committee, including the acting chair.
- The lead inspector held an online meeting with three representatives from the local authority, including the head of SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors considered a wide range of records and documents and spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated lead for safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences at school and took account of their responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views through their written free-text responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The lead inspector met with one parent and held telephone discussions with two other parents.
- The lead inspector held telephone discussions with leaders from two of the schools that have commissioned places for pupils at the Foundry. She also spoke with one of the alternative providers.

Inspection team

Sue Cox, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Linda Jacobs

Ofsted Inspector

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