

Inspection of a good school: Forest Bridge School

Braywick Road, Braywick Park, Maidenhead SL6 1BN

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 January 2024

Outcome

Forest Bridge School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Mrs Elizabeth Farnden. This school is part of the Forest Bridge School Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, also Mrs Elizabeth Farnden, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Naomi Radcliffe.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and proud ambassadors of their inclusive school. They appreciate how staff listen to them and respond to their needs quickly. Staff build positive relationships with pupils. They sensitively help pupils learn strategies to successfully manage their behaviour and emotions.

High expectations are part and parcel of everyday routines. The care and attention given to pupils ensures that their self-confidence and social skills grow exponentially. Pupils feel safe. They make friends and learn that they are valued and appreciated. For many pupils, Forest Bridge School ignites their curiosity and enthusiasm for education. As one pupil said, 'This school is like my second home.'

Pupils have many opportunities to develop their talents and interests. For example, they can learn to play musical instruments. They can also volunteer in the community and organise events to collect donations for causes they support. Pupils relish visiting the nearby shops to buy ingredients for the tasty meals and snacks they cook from scratch.

Playtimes are joyful and active occasions. Pupils enjoy basketball, football and also working out in the outdoor gym. They wholeheartedly contribute to the life of the school by becoming members of the popular school council and in their roles as monitors.

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

The school has expertly designed the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. From early years to Year 11, the curriculum sets out the step-by-step knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn. This is crafted around pupils' individual starting points and their education,

health and care (EHC) plan targets. Content is sensibly adapted into small steps so that pupils are not overwhelmed, and learning is manageable. Staff are adept at making sure that pupils receive the right equipment and resources to help them access the curriculum effectively. Purposeful, planned opportunities enable pupils to apply their learning in real-life situations. This helps to empower them and develop their independence. Specialist staff and therapists provide effective support and guidance in lessons. This enhances pupils' experience of the different subjects (domains) they study.

Pupils' starting points are carefully assessed when they join the school. Staff use this information to develop individual plans to support pupils' learning and development. They follow these plans carefully to ensure a consistent response throughout the school day. The school aims to identify the best curriculum route to ensure that older pupils leave with suitable qualifications such as functional skills and GCSEs.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They show pupils how to think about the subjects they study. Nevertheless, sometimes teachers do not check what pupils have learned and remembered. This means that they do not always reconnect with and build on previous learning as well as they could.

Reading is a top priority. Pupils listen in awe and enjoy hearing their teachers read to them. They look forward to choosing new books to share with their families and friends. Older pupils discuss the characters and themes of the texts they like. The books pupils read help them to practise the sounds they learn. However, there are some minor inconsistencies in the teaching of the school's phonics programme. This means that some of the weakest readers do not learn to read as quickly and confidently as they could.

The school strongly promotes pupils' attendance, which is currently above the national average. Staff are nurturing and caring and create positive, purposeful environments for learning. Parents appreciate the care and support their children receive to help them overcome some of their complex social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Most parents would recommend the school to others.

Trustees support leaders effectively to continue to improve the school. They use their expertise to support and challenge leaders in equal measure. Leaders consider staff workload carefully. Relationships between staff are strong and morale is high. Staff are proud to work at the school.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of the school's work. The life skills curriculum enables pupils to learn about healthy living. They learn how to keep themselves safe when online and in the community. Pupils receive age-appropriate relationships and sex education. They also receive effective support and advice about their possible future career pathways.

The school's curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn about democracy and deepen their understanding of what is right and wrong. Pupils develop respect and tolerance for differences in people. As one pupil said, 'It doesn't matter whether someone is gay or transgender. We treat each other as equals and with kindness. We do not tolerate any discrimination.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are some minor inconsistencies in how well the school's phonics programme is taught. As a result, some of the weakest readers do not learn to read quickly and confidently. The school should ensure that all staff are well trained and teach phonics effectively.
- Teachers do not consistently help pupils to make links with what they have learned previously. Consequently, pupils do not always remember and secure important knowledge as well as they could. The school should ensure that teachers help pupils to make links in their learning so that they can learn more and remember more across the curriculum.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2018.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	142066
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	10288053
Type of school	Special
School category	Free school special
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	113
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Naomi Radcliffe
CEO of the trust	Elizabeth Farnden
Headteacher	Elizabeth Farnden
Website	www.forestbridgeschool.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 to 14 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school moved into new, purpose-built premises in March 2021.
- The school caters for pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and SEMH needs. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- Most pupils are placed at the school by Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, personal, social and health education and employability. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, and teaching and specialist therapist staff in the school. The lead inspector met with three members of the board of trustees, including the chair. She also met separately with two officers from Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during visits to classrooms, during breaktimes and as pupils moved around the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents expressed in Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. Inspectors also considered the views of staff during meetings with them and through the staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jason Philipsz

Ofsted Inspector

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