

Inspection of a good school: The Forge Secondary Short Stay School

215 Easemore Road, Redditch, Worcestershire B98 8HF

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 April 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a calm and caring school. Pupils feel safe here. Most pupils settle well and build positive relationships with their peers during their time at the school.

Pupils join the school following a period of turbulence in their own education, and many do not feel positive about their experiences in their previous schools. Leaders are acutely aware of this, and pupils' past experiences are well understood. Leaders use this knowledge to rebuild pupils', parents' and carers' trust in education. Over time, this work is helping many pupils to begin to gradually re-engage with their education. Despite this, some pupils do not attend as often as they ought, and there is more to be done to build a culture of good attendance.

Leaders have high expectations and are ambitious for pupils. There is a growing culture of mutual respect between staff and pupils. However, too often, pupils do not behave well. They disrupt lessons and learning time is lost. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Recently, leaders have begun to pay closer attention to pupils' individual learning needs when they join the school. They build a detailed picture of the help and support that pupils need to be successful. However, staff do not always use this knowledge well enough to meet pupils' needs in lessons as well as they could. This holds pupils back.

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

The school is beginning to stabilise after a period of significant turbulence. The recently appointed interim headteacher has galvanised the staff behind his ambitious vision for the school. Leaders have been quick to identify the work needed to improve the school and

have begun to take strides to do so. While some of these changes are at an early stage, others are already having a positive impact on pupils' experiences.

Many pupils who attend the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities associated with their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Until recently, pupils' needs were not well understood by staff. However, leaders have worked smartly to revitalise their approach to supporting pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities in recent months. They work in partnership with external agencies and make use of a range of appropriate assessments to build a clear picture of pupils' needs when they join the school. Consequently, leaders often identify a range of previously undiagnosed needs.

Leaders have recently begun to revitalise the school's curriculum. Across some subjects they have planned an ambitious curriculum. Here, the things pupils learn build on the things they already know. This helps pupils to make sense of their learning. However, across too many subjects, the small steps that pupils need to take to be successful have not been clearly outlined. Consequently, teachers are not always clear about precisely what to teach, and at times, the things that pupils learn in lessons fail to take account of their starting points or meet their individual needs. This holds pupils back. Reading is encouraged. Leaders make sound use of diagnostic tools to identify those pupils who need support with their reading. Targeted interventions are helping those pupils who struggle to read to begin to read more fluently and confidently.

Leaders are relentless in their work to overcome barriers to pupils' good attendance. While many pupils struggle to attend as often as they should, for most pupils, their attendance improves well during their time here. However, despite this work, some pupils remain disengaged from their learning for too long. These pupils frequently fail to attend school often enough. This limits their learning.

In the past, pupils have struggled to manage their own behaviour. The school makes good use of 'restorative conversations' and carefully planned interventions to support pupils to manage their emotions more appropriately. Consequently, pupils' behaviour generally improves well during their time here. Lessons are generally calm, and most pupils focus on their learning. However, some teachers do not always have high enough expectations of pupils' behaviour and do not always challenge pupils when their behaviour falls below the expected standard. Where this happens, learning is disrupted.

The school has begun to reshape the curriculum devoted to pupils' wider personal development. This work has been well thought out. There is a growing range of opportunities available to pupils to help develop their understanding of socially acceptable behaviours outside of school. Leaders are supporting pupils well in their transitions into further education and future employment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not attend school often enough, and for a small minority, their attendance drops further while at the school. These pupils are missing too much of their education. The school should work closely with the local authority, and other external agencies, to provide effective support to these pupils and their families to help in overcoming the barriers to good attendance and ensure that all pupils attend school often.
- In some lessons, pupils' behaviour distracts from the intended learning. Some staff do little to challenge this. This disrupts learning for others. Leaders should make sure they continue their work to redefine their approach to behaviour management, and monitor the impact of this work carefully, to ensure that all staff apply this approach consistently, and that pupils receive the targeted support they need to improve their behaviour.
- Some staff do not use the information they have about pupils' individual needs well enough in lessons. Consequently, some pupils' needs are not being sufficiently met, and they struggle to access the learning. Leaders should ensure that all staff routinely make use of the information they have about pupils' needs in order to implement effective strategies to meet pupils' needs within lessons.
- In some subjects, the school has not defined the precise knowledge that pupils will learn. Where this happens, teachers are not clear about the knowledge pupils are expected to learn. Because of this, at times the things pupils learn do not build well on the things they already know. This holds pupils back. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is equally well planned across all subjects, so that the knowledge to be taught is clearly defined, and that teachers use this information to plan and teach.

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 October 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' 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	136161
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10294570
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andy McDouall
Headteacher	Daniel Smith
Website	www.theforge.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school currently uses one provider of alternative provision for a small number of pupils. This provider is unregistered.
- Pupils attending The Forge have been permanently excluded from their previous school. Some of them have an education, health and care plan relating to their SEMH needs.
- The school does not meet the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement 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.

- 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.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, and other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, personal, social health and economic education and English. 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 met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection.
- The inspectors considered responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Alexander Laney, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jane Edgerton

Ofsted Inspector

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