

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Forum Centre

The Forum Centre, Park Road, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 7BX

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 January 2025

Outcome

The Forum Centre has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils join the school following significant periods of time not in education. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many have education health and care (EHC) plans. The school prioritises building pupils' confidence, self-esteem and engagement in their learning. Pupils benefit from a well-designed personal development offer. They have opportunities to complete a range of experiences that support their social, emotional and mental health development. For example, secondary age pupils take on challenges as they work towards The Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

The school's ambitious curriculum and raised expectations of what pupils can achieve means most leave school with recognised qualifications. Pupils are well-prepared for the next step of their education.

Pupils value and appreciate the ways in which staff listen to them and help them in their learning. Staff treat pupils with respect and kindness. In turn, pupils learn to collaborate with others. They trust that staff will help them with any worries or concerns.

Pupils are taught the skills to self-regulate. Clear routines and expectations help pupils to make well-informed choices about their actions and conduct. They are supported expertly by staff. The school is calm and orderly. It provides a safe and supportive place where its pupils flourish socially and emotionally.

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

On entry to school, teachers check pupils' subject knowledge and skills. There is a sharp focus on identifying pupils' strengths and gaps in their English and mathematics knowledge. This information is used to contribute to pupils' individual 'personal learning

plans'. The plans are frequently reviewed and updated to ensure appropriate strategies to meet pupils' needs are accurately identified. Leaders support staff to use pupils' plans to make appropriate changes to the curriculum. They adapt their teaching to meet individual pupils' needs.

In most subjects, pupils are well-supported to close gaps in their subject knowledge. This includes checking and building on pupils' early reading knowledge. Most pupils benefit from regularly working with skilled staff to rectify gaps in their reading knowledge. This helps pupils to progress through the reading curriculum well. Where these checks are not thorough or information from these is not used effectively, gaps in pupil knowledge remain. The subsequent teaching and learning activities do not help pupils to secure new knowledge in these subjects as well as they could.

The school's personal development offer for its pupils is strong. Effective use of staff and external professional knowledge means pupils are prepared effectively for their next steps. For example, pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe in the community and online. The school's career offer is personalised to help promote strong outcomes for pupils. Impartial careers guidance and purposeful work experience opportunities introduce pupils to the world of work. Pupils are supported to make informed choices about their future education and career options.

Staff know pupils well. They are vigilant to changes in pupils' manner or appearance. Staff regularly discuss pupils' needs. They make appropriate adaptations to ensure pupils are successful personally and academically. This work has contributed to the significant reduction of behaviour incidents. The schools' expectations of how staff will support pupils to manage their behaviour are understood by all. Pupils learn in a supportive environment. The success of the school's work to implement its behaviour policy consistently well is shared with colleagues from other schools in the county.

The school has done much to improve pupils' attendance. Careful monitoring of pupils' attendance means emerging issues are dealt with swiftly. The recognition of pupils' emotional needs has helped the school to better understand how to support pupils effectively. Bespoke packages of support for pupils and their families, such as working with the school's outreach team, brings about success for most pupils.

Governors have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They play a pivotal role in supporting and challenging the school to continue to raise standards.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's assessment of secondary age pupils' reading does not identify gaps in their knowledge precisely enough. This is especially the case for some pupils in the early stages of learning to read. This means that misconceptions persist and can hinder pupils' future learning. The school should ensure that staff have the expertise they need to check and support secondary pupils to secure their reading knowledge.
- Staff do not have a secure knowledge of some foundation subject curriculum expectations. They do not check pupils' knowledge effectively. As a result, in some subjects, learning activities do not support pupils to secure knowledge and understanding well enough. The school needs to support staff to develop their knowledge of these foundation subject curriculums so that they assess and identify pupils' next steps accurately.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in October 2015.

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	131827
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10344574
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Maintained pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	81
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair of governing body	Mark Lawson
Headteacher	Kim Rickford
Website	www.theforumcentre.com
Date of previous inspection	16 July 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Forum Centre has a second site called The Orchard. It is situated at the Lychett Minster School, Post Green Road, Lytchett Minster, Dorset BH16 6JD.
- Dorset County is the commissioning local authority for the school.
- Pupils who attend the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) such as Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs and Autism.
- The school uses five unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school meets 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 evaluation 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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, other senior staff, teaching and support staff.
- An inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector met with a representative of Dorset local authority.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors observed pupils during social times and spoke with pupils and leaders about opportunities for pupils' personal development.
- 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 considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Marie Thomas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Richard Vaughan

Ofsted Inspector

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