

The Forest School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121775
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	331419
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Guy Warren
Headteacher	Mrs Monica Uden
Date of previous school inspection	May 2006
School address	Park Lane Knaresborough North Yorkshire HD5 0DQ
Telephone number	01423 864583
Fax number	01423 864583
Email address	headteacher@forest.n-yorks.sch.uk

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, and held meetings with the headteacher, the chair of governors, some individual staff and managers and with groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, data on pupils' progress, records of lesson monitoring, the development plan and targets. Inspectors also read 15 staff questionnaires and 44 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the school's records on pupils' progress
- the Early Years Foundation Stage
- how effectively teachers use the information contained in the pupils' individual education plans when they plan and teach their lessons

Information about the school

The Forest School is organised into a primary section which includes an Early Years Foundation Stage (EFYS) and a secondary section. All pupils have a statement specifying the additional provision the school must make in order to meet their specific learning or other needs. Classes are small.

Pupils with moderate learning difficulties are the largest group, just over one third of the school (38%), and a good proportion have severe learning difficulties. Some have physical or speech and communication difficulties and a quarter have needs on the autistic spectrum. The proportion of pupils with more complex needs has grown in recent years and a rising number of these pupils are now in the secondary section of the school. Very recently, a small number of pupils have been admitted who speak English as an additional language.

The school has achieved the ICT Mark, National Healthy School standard and holds Sportsmark and Activemark awards.

Under the local authority's plans for re-organisation, the school is due to close in 2013 and it is intended that a new school will be built on the site, catering for a wider range of special needs.

Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	129	Below average
Free school meals	22.8%	Above average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	100%	Well above average
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups	6.8%	Below average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	1.7%	Below average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	100%	Well above average

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The Forest school is an outstanding school. To quote the headteacher, 'We put the pupils at the heart of everything we do.' Staff know each pupil and their different needs and strive to help them overcome difficulties in order for them to be able to learn successfully. Pupils make excellent progress.

This is a happy school where pupils want to learn and where the care, support and guidance given to them to do so are outstanding. As a result, pupils leave at age 16 confident and well-prepared for their future.

Capacity to improve is outstanding. The proportion of pupils with more complex needs has increased, but the school is well on the way to dealing with this. There is a continuous programme of staff development and regular review and planning time for teachers, assistants and leaders in school to address this.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In response to the changing profile of pupils' needs in the school, continue the programme of staff development and curricular review to ensure that the school keeps pace with the range of different pupils' needs, including any who speak English as an additional language.
- Consider also:
 - extending further the personalisation of the curriculum, so that it meets individual pupils' needs in full
 - further sharing expertise from within and from outside the school, from external providers as appropriate, on how best to accommodate individual learning styles within group settings
 - sustaining small teaching groups and levels of support available to provide individual attention for pupils.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

1

Standards are very low because of the pupils' specific learning difficulties. However, pupils make excellent progress from their various starting points. It is, in nearly all cases, better than would be expected for their needs and often far better. Small

classes and good teaching enable pupils to maximise their attainment in lessons. For example, in an outstanding art lesson observed pupils learned new skills on blending colours and used new materials correctly.

Pupils with very complex needs also progress well, but their progress is of necessity slower. A very small number of pupils new to the school who have English as an additional language are having difficulty making the progress they should, but assistance has been secured to begin to support them more effectively.

As the pupils develop, build on routines and benefit from good teaching over time, progress accelerates through the school. Pupils progress so well that at age 16 nearly all stay on in education or gain employment. All pupils gain accreditation for their learning, and a small number gain GCSE qualifications.

Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and parents ensure that they do so. Consequently, attendance is high. Pupils say that they always feel safe in school and that the teachers support them well. Drop-in centres help with emotional problems. Pupils are attentive and show perseverance in lessons because the teachers plan work to suit them and are highly skilled at keeping them interested and working productively. Pupils like the reward system and are keen to have their efforts recognised.

Pupils' health is given a high priority. Pupils are aware of the need to take exercise and to eat healthily. They regularly do a wide range of sports at the local leisure centre and beyond, especially swimming, in which pupils compete as part of the Harrogate Disability team squad at regional level. Work in art and music contributes strongly to pupils' creativity and emotional well-being.

The school rightly sees pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development as key to unlocking potential. Whenever possible, independence is fostered and opportunities provided to develop the skills of working cooperatively, for example through the school council.

Through their work on Young Enterprise and through charity fundraising work locally and for a charity in India to build a school, pupils are conscious of the wider world beyond school and home.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

The quality of the school's work

There are highly effective systems for tracking pupils' progress. Over a number of years, performance data shows clearly how pupils move up or through the different levels, either below National Curriculum Level 1, or once they reach this. Often, owing to their needs, pupils make only small steps at a time in their learning. However, the school's system subdivides levels so that parents can see how their children are progressing over time, even when they are not yet able to reach National Curriculum levels. Progress is compared with how pupils do in similar schools to check whether everyone is doing as well as they could. The school quickly spots if someone falls behind. Very few do and there are usually good, personal reasons for this. The school then steps in to support them.

Teaching is good overall and inspectors saw a number of outstanding lessons. Relationships between the staff and the pupils are excellent. The atmosphere for learning is calm and productive. Teachers plan lessons very effectively to meet the different needs in their class. They are very familiar with each pupil's targets as expressed in their individual education plans. Inspectors observed how this information was consistently used very effectively, for example to direct questions at an individual pupil to get them more involved in a lesson; or to have an extension task already in mind for someone whose pace of work was faster, as seen in an outstanding Key Stage 3 English lesson.

Occasionally introductions to lessons or explanations can be a little rushed and it is more difficult, then, for pupils with more complex needs to follow.

The partnership between teachers and teaching assistants is excellent. Teachers and assistants use lesson-time most productively. Inspectors noted the seamless way in which teaching assistants and teachers work together in lessons, moving just at the right moment from one pupil or group to another to help.

Provision for work-related learning is strong. All pupils in Key Stage 4 do regular work experience and attend local colleges part-time, following a range of exciting taster courses. All Year 10 participate in the Young Enterprise programme, with one student a winner of a national award for enterprise in 2007 and 2008. More able pupils follow GCSE courses in mathematics, science and art. Some also have a link with a local school for GCSE information and communications technology (ICT). The school takes care to monitor how well pupils are doing in these course and activities. These features of the curriculum help pupils to gain confidence, develop social skills and open their eyes up to the world outside. In this way the school prepares pupils very effectively for the next stage in their life.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	1
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. She provides clear direction. The governors support the school well, and trust the judgement of the headteacher. They have good links with the different sections of the school that keep them well-informed. They are keen to raise their level of challenge to the school still further as they gain a deeper understanding of the school's systems for measuring pupils' progress.

A team of capable senior leaders works closely with the headteacher to drive forward improvement. Staff questionnaires show that staff morale is very high.

The school has successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection: the Early Years Foundation Stage has been reorganised and is now outstanding; and teachers throughout the school use pupils' individual educational plans more effectively when they plan and teach lessons.

The school is highly self-evaluative, with appropriate targets set for pupils and for the school as a whole, based on careful analysis. Some recent improvements have been made, for example to Key Stage 3, with a more thematic approach and classes organised so that pupils at a similar stage of learning work together. In this way the school is keeping abreast of the changing picture of pupils' needs as they move through school.

Pupils attend from a number of different localities. The school successfully promotes good links with parents in each, for example through regular communications with home. The school sees these links as a continuing priority in its development, as pupils' needs grow more complex.

The care and safeguarding of its pupils is given the utmost priority in this school. Inspectors observed one good example: a police visit to assembly where pupils of secondary school age were given advice presented in a way they could understand and remember, about keeping safe, by ensuring everyone knows where they are and by being where they should be at all times.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	1
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	1
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	1

Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Teachers and teaching assistants work particularly well together to ensure that pupils from the very earliest age feel comfortable and ready to learn. They know and respond to each child very well and show particularly high levels of teaching skills. This reflects the investment the school has made in staff training and development and the regular time given to shared planning for lessons.

There is a good range of resources for indoor and outdoor play and learning, and it is easy for pupils to move from one to the other. Teachers encourage independence from a very early age, through offering choices to the children. However, they also guide their choice of activities to ensure a good balance that will promote each child's all-round development. Teachers take every opportunity to observe and note when a child has achieved something, however small a step.

Provision for the children's social and personal development is a strength. Learning key words and routines, how to respond to these and to other children around them creates a learning environment where the children feel secure and can develop

The EFYS is well led and managed. Work is carefully structured to ensure that the children make good progress throughout. Progress is slower at this stage than at later stages in school only because the children's needs are often complex and they are still very young. Records of progress are detailed, including medical and other relevant information.

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?*	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?*	1
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?*	1
How effectively is the provision in the EYFS led and managed?*	2

* Common judgements made across all inspections of the EYFS

Views of parents and carers

Around one third of parents responded to the questionnaire. Virtually all strongly support the school and its work. Parents value the care provided for their children and the high quality teaching. There were many glowing comments, typically referring to 'the dedicated headteacher and staff'; or noting pupils' growth in confidence: 'My child has come on really well since coming to the school.' There were hardly any concerns and these were raised by only one or two parents. Inspectors found no evidence to support them.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



20 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Forest school, Knaresborough HG5 0DQ

I am writing to thank you for your help when I came to your school recently with Mr Simm and to tell you what we think about your school.

I have written a report and I say in it that your school is 'outstanding'. That means we think it is super! We know you think it is super, too.

You told us how much you enjoy school and that you feel safe there. You told us that the teachers and other adults care for you and support you really well. We agree. We think that the teaching is good. Your teachers are good at helping you to understand. We saw some great lessons. You are right – they are sometimes fun.

We know that you find lessons difficult but we were pleased to see how hard you try and how well you behave. We can see how much you are learning. We think you make excellent progress.

We were pleased to hear all about the sports you do to keep healthy.

We think that the Young Enterprise programme that close and the days at work and college are great ideas. You learn a lot of useful things for when you have to go out and work, too, one day. We can see that this helps you grow more confident in meeting other people, in speaking and listening, and organising.

We think your headteacher, Mrs Uden, does an excellent job and that all the teachers and other adults work hard, too. We think we don't need to tell them much about how to make the school better! Your parents filled in a questionnaire and told us how happy they are with your school.

We enjoyed our visit to your school and we send you our best wishes for the future.

H Gordon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.