

# Inspection of an outstanding school: The Forest School

Park Lane, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire HG5 0DQ

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Inspection dates:

17–18 December 2019

## Outcome

The Forest School continues to be an outstanding school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

## What is it like to attend this school?

The Forest School is a kind and welcoming place. Pupils are safe and happy and enjoy coming to school. Staff know the pupils well. There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. Staff have worked hard to change the way they react and respond to pupils' behaviour. They now look at behaviour as a form of communication and work out what the pupil is trying to say. This helps pupils to understand their emotions and be more able to talk about and control their anger. Pupils' behaviour has improved as a result of the changes in staff reactions. Bullying is dealt with swiftly by staff. Parents and carers, and pupils, agree.

Leaders have high aspirations for pupils. However, this is not always seen in the way all subjects are taught. In literacy and science, the qualifications that pupils study do not always enable all pupils to achieve well. In some subjects, teachers are not clear about the order in which topics are taught. This means some pupils are not learning the basic steps.

Parents and carers who made their views known are positive about the school. One parent reflected the views of many when they said, "The staff at Forest School go above and beyond to nurture and support the children".

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

Pupils are taught a wide range of subjects. In some subjects, such as mathematics, the information that pupils learn is well ordered. This helps pupils build their knowledge and develop their skills. In other subjects, the approach to organising what pupils learn is not as clear.

Leaders are developing work on phonics and the development of reading skills. Pupils read books suited to their interests and abilities. Pupils enjoy adults reading to them. Teachers are skilled in involving all pupils in class stories.

Teachers ask questions to check that pupils understand what is being taught. However, a small number of staff do not use questioning effectively to ensure pupils' misunderstandings are addressed. Where questioning is stronger, teachers have an accurate picture of what pupils know and need to learn.

Leaders have a clear action plan for the implementation of an assessment system. This system will support teachers in ensuring pupils' knowledge and skills in subjects are correctly assessed. Currently, leaders do not have an accurate picture of pupils' curriculum understanding in all subjects.

Leaders have high expectations for behaviour. Pupils are supported to understand and manage their own behaviour through, for example, effective communication or sensory breaks. Classrooms are calm places of learning. Pupils and staff agree that bullying is rare. All incidents of bullying are dealt with sensitively. Pupils are helped to realise the impact that their behaviour has on others.

Relationships between pupils and adults are strong. Staff treat pupils with respect and dignity. Pupils enjoy learning. They say that teachers are there to help them learn and keep them safe.

Pupils have lots of opportunities to develop their personal and social skills. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online and how to stay healthy through a healthy diet and exercise. Pupils enjoy a wide range of learning activities outside the classroom. These include horse riding, swimming and visits to museums and places of religious worship.

Staff are proud to work at the school. Teachers new to the profession talk positively about the high levels of support and training they receive. Some staff feel that their workload has increased recently. Leaders have taken this into account and have introduced measures to support staff. For instance, they have appointed a student services manager to support external meetings and post-incident reviews.

The headteacher and the governors are committed to the school and its pupils. They understand the main priorities for improvement. Governors provide strong support and challenge to leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The headteacher is diligent and ensures that all adults have comprehensive and regular safeguarding training. Staff understand the important role they play in keeping pupils safe. They are clear about how to report any concerns they may have.

Leaders have extensive knowledge of the local safeguarding risks. They work well with other agencies to keep pupils safe. They ensure pupils receive the help they need.

Leaders carry out thorough checks to ensure all adults are safe to work with children.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- There is variation in how well curriculum leaders understand and plan what pupils should learn. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum leaders have the subject expertise to develop a curriculum that helps pupils to know and remember more over time.
- Some staff do not consistently address pupils' misconceptions. This leads to misunderstandings in pupils' curriculum knowledge. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the subject knowledge to ensure that pupils' misunderstandings are corrected.
- Leaders are in the process of reviewing the school's assessment systems. Current assessment is personalised, with targets set against pupils' education, health and care plans. However, leaders do not have a clear picture of how pupils are progressing in all subject areas. Therefore, they do not fully know the extent of pupils' learning. Leaders should continue to amend the assessment system so they know how well pupils are learning in all subjects.

## **Background**

When we have judged a special school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in June 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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	121775
<b>Local authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10110861
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	128
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Tim Mottram
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michelle Farr
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.forest.n-yorks.sch.uk">www.forest.n-yorks.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10–11 June 2015

## Information about this school

- The Forest School is a community special school that caters for pupils between the ages of 3 and 16. The school has early years provision. However, at the time of the inspection, there were no children in the early years provision.
- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. The current headteacher has been in post for two years.
- Pupils have a range of multiple and severe learning difficulties, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, physical needs, complex medical needs, hearing impairment, Downs Syndrome and autism spectrum disorder.
- The vast majority of pupils have speech, language and communication needs. The Forest School is a communication and interaction specialist school.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- At the time of the inspection, two pupils were on reduced timetables. These timetables were agreed with the local authority to specifically meet the complex needs of the pupils.
- The school offers a wide range of lunchtime clubs for pupils.

## Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, we held meetings with senior leaders, curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff. We spoke with two members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- We spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- We considered the 19 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 15 free-text responses.
- We considered the 30 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- We met with leaders responsible for safeguarding in the school.
- We scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including policies and procedures, behaviour records and the school's self-evaluation documents.
- We observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school. We spoke with pupils both formally and informally about their learning and behaviour at the school.
- As part of this inspection, we looked in depth at English, mathematics, reading and science. We spoke to teachers and curriculum leaders. We visited lessons. We talked to pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books, as well as other evidence of their learning.

## Inspection team

Tricia Stevens, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

David Penny

Ofsted Inspector

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