

# Inspection of The Forest School

Park Lane, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire HG5 0DQ

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Inspection dates: 21 and 22 February 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires Improvement**

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The quality of education

Requires Improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires Improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5  
of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

There is a caring, nurturing and welcoming environment throughout The Forest School. Pupils behave well and get on well with each other. There is mutual respect between pupils and staff in and out of lessons. Bullying is very rare. Pupils are confident that staff will resolve any incidences of bullying quickly.

Leaders have recently developed the school's academic curriculum. Although leaders are well on the way to developing their plans, there is currently some variation in the quality of pupils' learning experiences in the classroom. Some lessons are notably more productive and successful than others. Leaders have more to do to ensure all pupils benefit from purposeful learning opportunities.

The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is a real strength of the school's offer. Pupils are taught how to stay safe and look after themselves. Opportunities are provided for pupils to explore their interests such as catering, photography and the environment. Pupils are supported to access future training and employment opportunities.

Pupils enjoy attending school. Their attendance has increased in recent months. Many parents, carers and pupils would recommend the school to others.

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

There is a positive and optimistic culture throughout school. Staff are enjoying the stability in place, following several changes to the leadership of the school since the previous inspection. These changes include joining a multi-academy trust, the appointment of a new principal and alternations to the responsibilities within the senior leadership team. There have been several additions to the board of trustees and the local governing body. Approximately 40% of teaching and support staff have also been appointed in this time.

As a result of these changes, lots of new initiatives are currently being implemented. Some of these projects need time to become embedded and fully successful.

Leaders have carefully considered the curriculum. Subject leaders have amended their curriculum plans. They have identified the most important concepts within topics and outlined the best order in which to teach them. Having modified the curriculum, leaders are currently reviewing pupils' access to qualifications in key stage 4 and have plans in place to broaden the current offer.

In some lessons, the curriculum is well implemented. In these lessons, staff are clear about their roles and pupils are engaged in learning. However, there is variation in the quality of pupils' educational experience in lessons. Sometimes, the work provided in lessons does not support pupils to achieve the aims of the curriculum. The work pupils do in the half-hour long 'nurture' session at the start of the day, for example, is not as ambitious as it could be for some pupils. Sometimes

these sessions focus on completing simple work rather than allowing pupils to make progress towards their individual targets.

Currently, several different systems for assessment are used. Leaders have plans to streamline these. Some current methods of assessment do not support teachers to check if pupils have remembered the most important concepts identified in teaching plans.

A new scheme to support pupils' reading has been introduced. Although staff have been trained on how to implement the scheme with their pupils, there is variation in the way it is used in lessons. There are also missed opportunities to help embed this learning. As such, some pupils are benefiting from the scheme more than others.

All pupils at this school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The individual needs of pupils are well known by staff and the targets in place to support pupils are appropriate. Some pupils with more complex needs are grouped in classes which access a less-formal curriculum. The classroom environment, lesson structure and quality of learning in these classes are inconsistent.

There is extensive pastoral and developmental support available for pupils. Support from external colleagues, including speech and language experts, is well used. The clear routines and calm atmosphere in school benefit pupils, not least those with autism spectrum disorder and with social, emotional and mental health needs.

Pupils access PSHE lessons as part of the 'me in the world' curriculum. This is a particular strength of the school. This curriculum is well designed and implemented. Pupils learn about themselves, relationships, careers and staying safe in the world. During the inspection, pupils explained to inspectors about how this helps them to prepare for life after school.

Governors and trustees work closely with colleagues from the trust to maintain oversight of the school's improvement priorities. These groups have appropriate oversight of their important strategic responsibilities, such as following safeguarding and equalities guidance. They are currently improving their awareness and oversight of the school's use of alternative provision.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders check that new staff are safe to work with pupils. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. Leaders check that staff have understood these messages. Staff are clear about how to report issues and who to report them to. When support is needed, leaders work with external agencies to help keep pupils safe.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe. Leaders have added extra water safety sessions to ensure pupils are aware of the dangers of playing in rivers and the local lido.

They are also adding additional railway safety lessons to help pupils understand the risks of the railway, including the track that runs adjacent to the school.

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

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

- Some of the work done by pupils does not support them to achieve the aims of the school's curriculum. For example, the resources and materials that pupils access in lessons are not consistently ambitious. As a result, some of pupils' experiences in lessons contribute less well to their learning of the school's curriculum. Leaders should ensure that the work pupils do consistently matches the curriculum ambition.
- In some subjects, teachers do not identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge consistently. This means that teaching is not matched to pupils' needs. Leaders should ensure that assessments align with curriculum plans and are used to identify where learning should be revisited.
- Leaders have introduced a new curriculum to support pupils in becoming confident readers. However, the implementation of this in classrooms is variable. There are missed opportunities to embed new learning and help pupils read fluently. Leaders should ensure that pupils' experiences of the reading curriculum are consistently of a high quality.
- Across all key stages, pupils with high levels of SEND who access the less-formal curriculum do not benefit consistently from meaningful learning opportunities. As such, these pupils are not as well prepared for the next stage of their learning as they could be. Leaders should reconsider the curriculum and learning environment in these classes to ensure they meet the needs of these pupils.
- The current curriculum does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils moving into key stage 4 to access additional qualifications. As such, the current range of qualifications does not prepare pupils for life after school as well as it could do. Leaders should enact the plans they have to expand the range of accreditation options for older pupils.

## **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](#)' 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>	147819
<b>Local authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241290
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	136
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Cheryl Hobson
<b>Principal</b>	Shona Crichton
<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>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school joined the Wellspring Academies Trust in April 2020.
- The current headteacher started in post in December 2022.
- The school uses three providers of alternative provision. One of these is a registered provider and subject to inspection by Ofsted. Two others are unregistered providers.
- Through its careers programme, the school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause and provides pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with the headteacher and several members of the school's leadership team. A discussion was held with the chief executive officer of the trust (who is also a trustee). Other trustees were not available to speak with members of the inspection team during the inspection. Other senior leaders from the trust were also met, in addition to the chairperson of the local governing body.
- To evaluate the quality of education, deep dives were carried out in early reading, including communication, mathematics, science and the 'me in the world' curriculum (which includes PSHE). These involved meeting subject leaders, reviewing curriculum plans, visiting lessons, speaking to teachers, talking to pupils about their learning and looking at samples of their work.
- As part of the evaluation of the effectiveness of safeguarding, the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and other records were reviewed. The checks made when appointing new staff were scrutinised.
- The views of parents, carers and staff who responded to Ofsted's surveys were also fully considered.

### **Inspection team**

James Duncan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Berni Moorcroft

Ofsted Inspector

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