

Inspection of an outstanding school: Forest Oak School

Windward Way, Smith's Wood, Birmingham, West Midlands B36 0UE

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 June 2024

Outcome

Forest Oak School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

An ambitious and aspirational curriculum successfully brings out the best in pupils. A strong sense of purpose and independence is evident throughout all key stages. Pupils take their learning seriously. Staff skilfully intertwine managing behaviour with promoting the importance of learning well.

The 'CALM' approach of co-operation, attitudes to learning and manners is effective. Pupils achieve exceptionally well. They are well prepared for what comes next and beyond into adulthood. Pupils rightly say, 'Staff here 'get' us. They know how far to push us without pushing us too far.'

Pupils learn right from wrong. They like the safe, happy atmosphere. If unkind or bullying behaviour happens, it is noted, reported, dealt with and recorded clearly. Staff and pupils are strong in their convictions of the benefit of the 'talk and sort' and 'circle' conversations in resolving differences and difficulties.

Pupils regularly go out into the community. They gain vast and varied experiences of life beyond school. Pupils value this and recall these with fondness and detail. They take their responsibilities in school council seriously, for example discussing local issues around railways with relevant senior people outside of school.

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

The school has thought carefully about tweaks and changes that have been made to the curriculum. The pathways that were put in place at the start of the year are secure and well matched to pupils' needs. Leaders keep a close eye on the impact of their actions. They know what is working well and where refinements are needed. As a result of this reflective and astute leadership, including governance, provision is well matched to the changing needs and cohorts of pupils.

Pupils, from the early years through to sixth form, follow a structured and sequenced curriculum. The attention to detail shines through. Staff know what to teach, when and why. As importantly, they know how best to shape the learning for each individual pupil. A range of support and training ensures that staff are knowledgeable and develop and apply expertise in fluid but targeted ways. Staff do this with skill and flair. Pupils benefit greatly from this and achieve well. The learning in school is applied to learning in the 'real' world. This helps prepare pupils for adult life, including through community events.

The school is uncompromising in its belief that pupils will learn to read. They see it as a vital life skill and one that requires time, practice, high-quality resources and staff who know how to deliver phonics. These ingredients combine to ensure that each pupil who is learning to read is given the right building blocks alongside lots of supported practice to master the art of reading. And master it they do. Pupils learn to read increasingly complex texts at the right pace and move on at the right time. Listening to pupils who are in the very earliest stages of learning to read, one word at a time, to hearing older pupils read their own story that has been published, shows the success of the reading curriculum.

The school begins this positive attitude to learning and life in the early years. Children gradually, step by step, learn to understand and follow routines. They learn to know that they have their own space but so does everyone else. They are given and practise words and actions in such a way that they gain a voice and can communicate their wants, needs and interests. Staff know and understand each unique child. They know the child's needs in fine detail and use this knowledge to good effect. The combination of this skill and expertise ensures children in Reception and pupils in Acorns are ready for each new day and year.

Work experience opportunities are varied and comprehensive. From working in retail outlets to care homes and cafes, pupils have high-quality and meaningful experiences to share life in employment. This gives them aspirations for future work roles. Older pupils talk with knowledge and understanding about their interests and the opportunities open to them beyond school. Discussing future options with pupils about working in customer service, having the confidence to travel on a bus in a wheelchair, becoming a photographer or going on to study a subject at a mainstream college brings aspirations to life. Pupils share a strong sense of a 'can do, will do' attitude.

'Working together, realising potential' is the golden thread running through all that happens at Forest Oak School. Every action and interaction that occurs makes a very real and positive difference to each pupil.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a 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 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 outstanding in February 2014.

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	104132
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10322721
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	184
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Antoinette Fisher
Headteacher	Donna Luck
Website	www.forest-oak.solihull.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The executive headteacher joined the school in September 2022.
- The school caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school's key stage 4 provision is known as Oakwood and is sited at postcode B36 0QQ. The school's sixth-form provision is sited within Solihull College, Woodlands Campus, Smith's Wood, Solihull B36 0NF.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- 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 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.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders and other leaders.
- The lead inspector met with six members of the governing body, including the chair. They also spoke to a representative from the local authority and the school improvement consultant.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, English, mathematics, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- An inspector visited the key stage 4 and sixth-form provision.
- 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 reviewed a range of school documents relating to the work of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders and staff about the wider work of the school.
- Inspectors took into account the views of parents, including reviewing the responses to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors reviewed the staff survey.

Inspection team

Kirsty Foulkes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ann Pritchard

His Majesty's Inspector

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