

Forest Academy

Bury Road, Brandon, Suffolk IP27 0FP

Inspection dates

30 November–1 December 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Many pupils do not achieve as well as they should in English and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- Leaders' and governors' actions to improve pupils' progress in English and mathematics in key stage 2 have only recently started to have a positive impact.
- At times, staff do not have sufficiently high expectations of pupils. When this happens, pupils are not challenged by the tasks they are set.
- While some teaching helps pupils to make progress, there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school.
- Some disadvantaged pupils do not make the progress they are capable of because some teachers do not take their specific needs sufficiently into account.
- In some classes, teachers do not correct pupils' misconceptions in a timely way. As a result, the progress pupils make slows.
- Leaders do not ensure that where there is effective teaching practice it is shared widely. As a result, the quality of teaching pupils receive over time is inconsistent.
- On occasions, questioning in the early years does not challenge children enough. Leaders have not ensured that children have access to a variety of learning activities and resources.

The school has the following strengths

- Through a legal partnership, the school works with a local primary school. Senior leaders from both schools co-operate closely.
- Teaching in some classes helps pupils to make good progress because teachers explain work clearly and well and help pupils overcome difficulties in their learning.
- Leaders provide well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Newly introduced strategies are leading to improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment but these have not had time to make a difference to pupils' overall achievement over time.
- Pupils achieve well in phonics because they are taught consistently well.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in school and are keen to learn.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and set tasks that enable greater proportions of pupils to achieve higher standards
 - teachers are equipped with the skills and knowledge to deal with pupils' misconceptions effectively so pupils make more rapid progress
 - strategies for supporting disadvantaged pupils focus more effectively on the specific barriers faced by the school's own pupils.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders' and governors' actions to improve standards of teaching, learning and assessment in English and mathematics in key stage 2 are monitored closely
 - existing effective practice is shared more widely to improve the consistency of the quality of teaching across the school.
- Improve the early years provision by ensuring that:
 - staff members are equipped with the skills to ask children more challenging questions about what they are learning
 - a greater variety of learning resources (including computing and technology) are provided and used widely and effectively by staff to support children's learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders' responses to the challenge of pupils' slow progress in key stage 2 have not yet brought about rapid improvement in standards. Leaders' and teachers' expectations are sometimes too low. New strategies, often developed through effective partnership work with a local primary school, are leading to improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, they have not had enough time to make a significant difference in raising standards.
- Leaders are diligent in the time that they commit to monitoring the quality of teaching in the school. Improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment as a consequence of this feedback are, however, inconsistent. Leaders have not ensured that the strongest teaching practice is routinely and widely shared across the school.
- Leaders of English and mathematics have an accurate understanding of where pupils are not doing well enough, and they have produced improvement plans to help pupils to achieve higher standards. Where these plans have had time to take effect, teaching improves and pupils perform better. For example, in Year 2, teachers provide pupils with more challenging texts, and expect pupils to provide regular written responses to these texts. As a consequence, standards in reading in Year 2 are improving, but they are not yet improving as consistently across other year groups.
- Leaders' and governors' plans to improve standards in mathematics are also leading to some improvements in pupils' work. For example, leaders' adjustments to the school's approach to the teaching of calculation have led to an improvement in the mathematical understanding of pupils in Years 5 and 6. However, standards are not yet improving as quickly in some other year groups.
- Leaders rightly reflect upon their use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and can demonstrate in detail how it is spent. Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the barriers that can be faced by their pupils in general. Sometimes their plans for helping these pupils to reach higher standards are not sufficiently focused on their current pupils' particular needs. This means that standards for disadvantaged pupils are not improving as quickly as they should.
- Staff are positive about the good-quality training they receive in school. Newly qualified teachers spoke highly of the support provided for them. This training and support is an important part of leaders' plans to bring about improvements in standards. However, it has not had sufficient time to have a significant impact on pupils' outcomes.
- School leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is taken seriously. The school has strong links with local churches whose leaders regularly lead assemblies such as the 'Christingle' assembly observed during the inspection. Pupils also take on responsibilities such as junior road safety officers, junior sports 'leaders', or as members of the school council. As a consequence, pupils feel safe and valued and the impact of these activities is seen in their considerate, reflective behaviour.

- Leaders have ensured that the school has a positive and inclusive culture, where difference is embraced and pupils treat each other with respect. Leaders are working successfully with agencies outside school to develop strategies to reduce the number of pupils who receive fixed-term exclusions.
- The school's topic-based curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to extend their knowledge across a range of subjects. Pupils are proud of the work they produce in these lessons but the tasks teachers set for them do not always challenge them sufficiently well.
- Leaders use physical education and sports funding effectively to employ specialist staff to work alongside the school's staff and support them in their practice. The school also provides a number of clubs and enables pupils to attend a variety of sports competitions and festivals. Pupils speak very positively about this aspect of the school's work.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is carefully allocated. Leaders work closely with parents, pupils and external agencies to help pupils make progress. Leaders carefully monitor pupils' achievement and make sure that they receive necessary support when it is needed. As a consequence, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress.

Governance of the school

- Governors and trustees are aware that they need a broad range of skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. While governance is effective overall, a number of governors and trustees are recent appointments and are undertaking an audit to assess the range of skills that they currently have.
- Governors and trustees visit the school regularly to observe how the school is working towards the targets in its improvement plans. They use their findings to ask pertinent questions of school leaders about their strategies for improving standards in the school.
- Governors and trustees recognise their responsibilities in holding school leaders to account for pupils' progress. Minutes of their meetings demonstrate governors are increasingly effective in doing so.
- Governors and trustees are aware of the challenges facing the school, in particular the lower than national average standards in English and mathematics, and have a clear understanding of the actions the school is taking to address these challenges.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have ensured that safeguarding policies are robust, thorough and meet statutory requirements. Leaders have also made sure appropriate background checks are carried out on all new staff. An up-to-date record of these checks is kept which complies with all necessary requirements.
- Staff receive regular safeguarding update training and know what to do if they have concerns about the safety or well-being of a pupil.

- Leaders' well maintained records demonstrate the school offers effective support to vulnerable pupils and their families, and works successfully with local outside agencies when it is appropriate to do so.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe both inside and outside school. They are able to describe how the school has helped them to know how to stay safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it is inconsistent, and does not enable pupils to achieve as well as they should.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment has not been accurate enough to help teachers to have high enough expectations of the quality of work that some pupils could produce. Leaders have recently taken steps to improve the accuracy of assessment. The revised systems have not been in place long enough to make a significant difference to pupils' progress over time.
- Not all teachers successfully make clear to pupils what they need to do to make better progress. As a result, in work across the school pupils repeat mistakes – for example, the incorrect use of capital letters in the middle of words or sentences.
- Some teaching challenges pupils to make good progress. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils were required to use mathematical reasoning to solve problems about ratio. Some other teaching, however, does not extend pupils' learning sufficiently for them to make sustained progress.
- While pupils benefit from opportunities to work with the school's partner school in subjects including art, French and history, some work in books indicates that pupils are not being sufficiently challenged. For example, in science, pupils are sometimes not challenged to use what they have learned to attempt to make scientific generalisations or predictions.
- Pupils are often enthusiastic about extending their knowledge in preparation for writing: for example, when researching information about topics such as penguins. Pupils are not, however, consistently shown how to write correctly. Difficulties with writing sentences correctly, for example, can sometimes undermine the clarity of pupils' writing.
- The quality of teaching across the wider curriculum is inconsistent. Some activities help pupils to make good progress in subjects other than English or mathematics, such as the school's World War Two 'Immersion Day'. In some other subjects, however, pupils are not always given the opportunity to extend their knowledge and understanding – for example, they are not challenged enough to use their knowledge of science to think scientifically.
- While pupils generally take pride in the presentation of their work, an inconsistent approach to the teaching of handwriting across the school means that some pupils' handwriting is significantly better than others'.
- The teaching of phonics is carried out consistently and thoroughly in key stage 1. This helps pupils to perform well in the Year 1 phonics screening check.

- Because basic reading skills are well taught, pupils across the school read enthusiastically and fluently but they are less adept at explaining their understanding of what they have read. Pupils respond well to improvement strategies, such as in Year 2, where more opportunities for regular comprehension practice are being provided, and begin to make better progress.
- Parents and carers are kept well informed about their children's progress and are given opportunities to visit the school in sessions such as at the Reading Café or the Nursery's 'Stay and Play'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' conduct at lunchtime and break is friendly. Play leaders and playground buddies make sure that pupils have every opportunity to enjoy their play and develop their social skills.
- Pupils take pride in making their school a welcoming place. Pupils often greet visitors politely and make them feel at home. They also take pride in wearing their school uniform smartly.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and is dealt with well by staff. A large majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed, and school records confirmed this was the case.
- Pupils are aware of how people can be different. They are keen to explain how differences are embraced and celebrated in their school. They explained that rare cases of intolerance are dealt with effectively by staff and do not recur.
- Pupils enjoy serving on the school council, as junior road safety officers or junior sports 'leaders'. They take pride in their school environment by volunteering to be litter-pickers. This helps pupils to take responsibility for building an ethos of mutual co-operation and support within the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour around school is orderly and calm. They treat each other kindly and play well together during breaks. Pupils have developed mutually respectful and friendly relationships with adults.
- In class, pupils are keen learners and their behaviour reflects this. They listen attentively to their teachers when asked to do so, and also apply themselves enthusiastically to the tasks that their teachers give them. On the few occasions when pupils are not engaged in lessons, teachers are adept at supporting pupils to return to their task.
- A high number of pupils have been given fixed-term exclusions in recent years. To reduce these exclusions, leaders recently appointed a safeguarding and welfare officer

whose primary role is to promote pupils' welfare, offering support where necessary. She works alongside the SEN coordinator and pastoral team to seek advice and support from agencies outside of the school.

- While levels of overall absence, and persistent absence, are close to national averages, the safeguarding and welfare officer has developed strategies to improve attendance. The impact of these strategies is just beginning to be seen.
- The new safeguarding and welfare officer keeps accurate and up-to-date records of behaviour incidents and how the school has dealt with them. These records are helping leaders become even more effective in directing timely and well-structured intervention strategies where necessary, often with the support of outside agencies.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over the past two years, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 has been well below that of other pupils nationally.
- Attainment in the 2017 Year 6 tests in reading, and in English grammar, punctuation and spelling, was low. Not enough pupils in key stage 2 reached the higher standard in reading or English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Inspection evidence, including work in pupils' books, demonstrates pupils are making improved, but not yet good progress from their individual starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils' achievement was better than their peers in some subject areas, such as reading at the end of key stage 2. However, not enough disadvantaged pupils made consistently good progress when compared with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- By the end of key stage 2 in 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics was above national expectations. This was because strategies to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics in key stage 2 have been in place long enough to enable pupils to make better progress.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved at least the expected standard by the end of key stage 1 matched national expectations in mathematics, but was below in reading and writing. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils was below others nationally in reading and mathematics but in line with other pupils in writing.
- The progress being made by the most able pupils across the school is inconsistent owing to variations in teachers' expectations, and an assessment system that did not make it easy for teachers to identify them. These pupils are now beginning to achieve more highly because leaders have revised their assessment system to help teachers to challenge these pupils more.
- Work in pupils' books demonstrates that progress across year groups is beginning to improve but is still inconsistent. While Year 6 pupils are making good progress in mathematics, progress in other subjects and year groups is erratic, with some pupils making slower progress in some other subjects, such as science, over time.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have their progress checked regularly by the coordinator against their own specific targets. Interventions and additional support staff help them to make good progress from their different starting points.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children join the Nursery and Reception classes with a wide range of skills and abilities. In 2017 the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was in line with national averages. For many children this does not represent sufficiently strong progress from their starting points. Staff's expectations of what children can achieve in Reception are sometimes not significantly higher than in Nursery, meaning that a minority of children are not challenged sufficiently. This means that some children are not well enough prepared for Year 1.
- Adults gather a range of assessment data to help them to know what children do well and where they need to improve. They keep this up to date throughout a child's time in the early years and often use it to help them to plan activities to enable many children to make good progress.
- Leaders in the early years have an accurate understanding of why children do better in some areas of the curriculum than others. For example, they have identified that children need more opportunities to speak and listen to each other and adults. Leaders have rightly begun to improve this aspect of the curriculum. Sometimes leaders do not use their assessment information sufficiently well. For example, the significant gap in outcomes that widened in 2017 between boys and girls was not identified quickly, meaning that remedial action was not taken swiftly enough.
- Adults do not regularly ask probing questions to encourage children to reflect on their own learning. In addition, adults do not always give children feedback that is matched to their level of understanding. This means that it is sometimes difficult for children to make progress as a consequence of this feedback.
- While teachers provide a variety of learning resources, there are some gaps in these resources, particularly for computing and technological activities. On occasions, existing resources are not used effectively to promote learning because they are not sufficiently well used by adults to develop effective learning routines.
- Children behave in a friendly and co-operative way. They are confident and polite with adults and work well together, taking turns and sharing. For example, children in the nursery were able to take turns sharing their name and pointing to where it was written on a board.
- When adults engage children in conversation and challenge their thinking, children respond thoughtfully and enthusiastically. For example, children were working well together with an adult pretending to be on a bus.
Children agreed who should sit where, and they were supported to discuss how they might buy a ticket and how they should pay for it.
- Adults make sure that children are safe and well cared for at all times. The curriculum gives them activities to choose from, both indoors and outdoors, and leaders deploy staff effectively to ensure that children are supervised well.

School details

Unique reference number	136316
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10037645

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	381
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Gordon Hodgkinson
Headteachers	April Grimes and Lorna Rourke
Telephone number	01842 810 309
Website	www.forest.suffolk.sch.uk
Email address	forestadmin@forestacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 May 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- A partnership agreement is in place with Elveden Church of England Primary Academy. Through this agreement, the headteachers of the two schools share the leadership of both academies equally although each is currently employed by only one academy. Other leaders have responsibility across both academies, and teachers plan together. Pupils have some opportunities to participate together in trips and a range of events. The two schools have separate governing bodies but the chair of governors at Forest Academy is also the chair of governors at Elveden Church of England Primary Academy.

- Forest Academy is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning throughout the school, including observations with the joint headteachers. Inspectors also completed short observations jointly with the leaders of mathematics and English.
- The inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in every year group in English, mathematics and 'topic' books (covering the other main curriculum subjects). They also listened to pupils from Years 1, 3 and 5 read.
- The inspectors met with pupils, formally and informally, to listen to their views.
- Meetings were held with the headteachers, subject leaders for English and mathematics, SEN coordinator, safeguarding and welfare officer, early years leader, newly qualified teachers, key stage 1 phase leader, members of the governing body (including the chair), and a trustee director of the Forest Academy Trust.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation including information about pupils' attainment and progress, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of meetings and records relating to teaching and learning, pupils' attendance and behaviour, and safeguarding of pupils. The school's website was also scrutinised.
- The inspectors considered the views expressed by parents through informal meetings and the 46 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspectors considered the 25 responses to the staff questionnaire and the eight responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Richard Hopkins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Joanna Pedlow	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Morley	Ofsted Inspector

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