

Inspection of Forest Park School

Durham Way South, Newton Aycliffe Business Park, Newton Aycliffe DL5 6XP

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 March 2025

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Forest Park School positively transforms pupils' lives. Many pupils arrive having formed negative attitudes towards education, often following prolonged periods out of school. Although their previous journeys may have held challenges, pupils experience significantly smoother paths ahead. They quickly come to view Forest Park as a welcoming environment full of warmth, kindness and happiness. It is a place where they truly be themselves and flourish.

The school sets ambitious expectations for all pupils' achievement. Staff collaborate closely, including with clinical professionals and external agencies, to ensure that each pupil receives tailored and sensitive support. Consequently, pupils look forward to attending school and embrace the opportunities provided. Pupils achieve well as a result.

The school's clear routines, which pupils consistently follow, ensure a calm and orderly atmosphere. Through the curriculum, pupils develop an understanding of positive relationships. Pupils feel safe and secure, confident that supportive adults will address any worries or concerns promptly.

Pupils benefit from wider opportunities, including those provided through the locality's business community. These experiences support pupils effectively in preparing for fruitful careers or the next stages of education. The school thoughtfully matches opportunities to each pupil, ensuring maximum benefit and enjoyment. Nothing is left to chance.

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

The proprietor, alongside the school's headteacher, has established an environment at the school where everyone is valued. Their ambitions in establishing this new school are realised. The proprietor ensures that the school meets its statutory responsibilities under schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. School policies reflect the latest statutory guidance. The proprietor maintains a robust oversight of the independent school standards to ensure that they are met consistently.

Staff are committed to enabling pupils to excel. Expert staff provide focused support to enhance pupils' well-being. This results in pupils developing their readiness to learn. The school maintains an unwavering focus on ensuring pupils learn effectively through a carefully planned curriculum, which is tailored to pupils' developmental stages. This allows pupils to succeed in various qualifications, including GCSEs, and prepares them well for their next steps in education, employment or training.

On arrival at the school, leaders invest time in understanding pupils' previous unmet needs and barriers to learning. They consider the needs detailed in pupils' education and health care plans very carefully. Staff use this guidance well to meet pupils' needs. The school has established routine opportunities in each lesson to check pupils' prior knowledge. However, this strategy is not having its intended impact

because teachers do not consistently act on this information to adapt the curriculum or address misconceptions.

Pupils arrive at this school with a range of reading needs. There is variation in how well these needs are met. Although staff have expertise in phonics, the school's chosen scheme is not taught with sufficient consistency. This can limit some pupils' progression in this area.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They demonstrate highly positive attitudes towards learning, and highly respectful behaviour towards adults and peers. Pupils are eagerly committed to their learning. They take pride in their own achievements and that of others. They produce high-quality work.

The school's personal development provision supports pupils to make better choices in life. Pupils are encouraged to set ambitious goals and identify opportunities that align with their interests and talents. Pupils develop a strong understanding of how to stay safe and maintain their well-being. The school provides pupils with a well-structured careers education programme that equips them with the skills and guidance needed to transition successfully to meaningful next steps.

The proprietor and governors have a strong understanding of the school, maintaining a balanced approach to both challenge and support. Their well-established monitoring and oversight processes ensure effective guidance for school leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Checks made on pupils' prior knowledge are not used as effectively as they could be. This means that sometimes pupils' misconceptions persist because they are not addressed. The school should ensure that teaching better checks any gaps and/or misconceptions in pupils' knowledge and that this information is used to inform next steps in learning.
- The school's current approach to teaching early reading is inconsistent. While individual staff are trained in phonics, they do not deliver the school's current approach with fidelity. This means that those pupils who arrive at the school with significant weaknesses in their phonics knowledge do not receive consistent support. The school should prioritise training in its chosen approach to ensure that all pupils receive the same quality offer.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	150376
DfE registration number	840/6020
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10342223
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Proprietor	Forest Park School Ltd
Chair	Jill Gray
Headteacher	Jacqueline Reynolds
Annual fees (day pupils)	£76,500
Telephone number	01325 965220
Website	www.forestparkschool.co.uk
Email address	j.reynolds@forestparkschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school operates from a single site in the town of Newton Aycliffe in County Durham.
- The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs, ASD, speech, language and communication needs, and moderate learning difficulties.
- The school does not have a religious character.
- The school uses the services of two unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school's previous inspection was a pre-registration inspection in November 2023.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor, headteacher, members of the school's leadership team, staff and pupils. They also met with two representatives of the school's governing board.
- The lead inspector met with the student council.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and personal, social, health, and economic education, including citizenship. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector visited the two unregistered alternative provisions that the school commissions.
- 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.
- The inspection team considered the views of parents through responses to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys, as well as interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

- Inspectors considered a wide range of evidence to check compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Marcus Newby, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lynda Florence

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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