

Inspection of Forge Valley School

Wood Lane, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S6 5HG

Inspection dates: 1 to 2 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Dale Barrowclough. This school is part of Tapton School Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, David Dennis, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tom Ashford.

What is it like to attend this school?

Forge Valley School is an inclusive and welcoming school. There are strong relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils treat one and other with respect. The school has developed a culture of high expectation. The school's Forge Valley Pillars exemplifies the values and high standards the school expects.

The school has high aspirations for all pupils. It expects pupils to flourish both academically and socially. Typically, pupils strive to meet these high expectations. They behave well and try hard in lessons.

Pupils are happy in school. The school supports the mental health of pupils effectively. Bullying at the school is rare but, when it occurs, staff deal with it quickly. Pupils know where to seek support and this helps keep them safe.

Reading is important in this school. Pupils listen and read with their form tutor three times a week. Students in the sixth form support weaker readers with paired reading.

The school prioritises pupils' personal development. This means that pupils, including students in the sixth form, are taught important skills for life, including how to keep themselves safe. The school makes sure that pupils from different backgrounds and abilities access the same range of clubs and extra-curricular activities. Pupils told inspectors about how much they value their involvement in the school's Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

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

The school has put in place an ambitious and broad curriculum that has been designed to build on previous learning. Subject content is sequenced carefully, and important knowledge is regularly revisited to help pupils remember more. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Students in the sixth form have a wide range of options to select from, including the ability to mix academic and vocational qualifications. Teachers prepare them well for the increased demands of these courses.

Assessment is used well to check what pupils can do and identify those who may need extra help. Teachers swiftly identify and address common misconceptions. However, in some instances, the tasks and activities pupils complete do not always match the ambition of the planned curriculum. For example, pupils are not consistently expected to explain their learning or think more deeply. This limits some pupils' depth of understanding. Leaders have recognised this and put in place a professional development programme for staff to address this issue.

Support for pupils with higher levels of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is very effective. They access additional intervention sessions, where appropriate, to support them with their individual needs. Teachers receive helpful

information on the needs of pupils with SEND and use these strategies well in their lessons. In the sixth form, students with SEND are fully immersed in school life.

Pupils who need help to improve their reading receive effective support. They benefit from extra reading lessons and practise with sixth-form reading buddies. The school has prioritised reading. It has developed a structured programme that ensures all pupils can read books of different genres. This supports them to develop a love of reading.

The school has high expectations of how pupils behave and treat others. It communicates these expectations clearly. Staff reward pupils for doing the right thing. Behaviour throughout school is calm and orderly. The school does not tolerate bullying. Records show that the school consistently takes swift and appropriate action. Pupils are courteous, responsible, polite and well behaved. Suspensions and exclusions are low.

The school has prioritised improving pupils' attendance. Staff monitor pupils' rates of attendance carefully and provide effective support for those pupils who find coming into school more difficult. As a result of the school's endeavours, these pupils' rates of attendance have improved considerably.

The school's values are at the heart of the effective and exciting personal development programme. There is a huge range of clubs, trips and activities for pupils. The Forge Valley Pledge encourages pupils to take part in and enjoy these experiences. The careers programme is of a good quality. Pupils in Year 10 and students in the sixth form have opportunities to go on work experience. The school is, rightly, proud of the increasingly ambitious next steps that many pupils and students take after leaving school.

Teachers are passionate about their subjects. They enjoy a range of career development opportunities. These include working in partnership with other schools in the trust. Governors and trustees recognise the school's strengths and weaknesses. They engage well with leaders at all levels to further improve the school. Many parents and carers say that the school supports their children well, though some are not fully supportive of recent changes at the school.

Staff feel that their well-being is important to leaders. They say that leaders consider their workload effectively, and that leaders take action with this in mind. They are proud to work at Forge Valley School.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some instances, the tasks pupils complete do not consistently match the ambition of the planned curriculum. This means that pupils do not fully develop the depth of understanding they need to tackle future learning. The school should ensure that the curriculum is implemented with consistent ambition.
- Responses to the parental survey suggest that some parents are not happy about some of the changes being made at the school. This means that they cannot support their child to meet the school's expectations. The school should consider how best to communicate with all stakeholders when changes are introduced.

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 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	140547
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10323057
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,504
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	241
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tom Ashford
Headteacher	Dale Barrowclough
Website	www.forgevalleysheffield.org
Dates of previous inspection	30 April and 1 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Forge Valley School hosts a resource base for 25 pupils with autism. Admissions to the provision are controlled by the local authority. These pupils also access mainstream lessons and bespoke intervention sessions.
- The school uses eight registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- 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

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

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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and members of staff.
- The lead inspector met with members of the trust, trustees and members of the governing body. They also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils and students from Years 7 to 13 about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and visited the school's resource base.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors met with leaders, governors, staff and pupils. Inspectors reviewed the school's single central record. They considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and the free-text comments submitted by parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

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