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Mrs Sam Bailey
Executive Principal
The Forest Academy
Thornton Road
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South Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Bailey

Short inspection of The Forest Academy

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

Since the last inspection, you have continued to focus on making the school the best it can be. You lead the school with tenacity and an absolute determination to provide high-quality education, coupled with excellent personal development, for your pupils.

You have developed a high-quality, enthusiastic and loyal team of staff who are committed to supporting your vision. Staff morale is very high. They enjoy the opportunities that are available to them. Staff are highly ambitious for their pupils. They have extremely high expectations for all and, as a result, pupils' self-confidence increases. You and your staff have created an excellent learning culture in which pupils thrive and make significant progress. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

You have developed a curriculum that successfully meets the needs and interests of pupils. Pupils develop their key skills well through a wide range of subjects. Effective deployment of teaching assistants provides essential support for those who

need it. Pupils with SEND are taught within their classes, with careful and sensitive support provided by well-trained and knowledgeable staff.

You have positively and successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified in the school's last inspection. Intensive training, new ideas and approaches and the positioning of experienced and high-quality staff have resulted in excellent standards of teaching throughout the school. You have developed your middle leaders very well. They make a significant impact on teaching and learning throughout the school. They use their knowledge, experience and skills to model good practice and inspire others. You and the governing body hold them to account for their actions.

Governors dedicate a great deal of time to the school and, as a result, have a deep understanding of The Forest Academy. Governors play an important role in the school, provide good levels of challenge to leaders and base their decisions on clear evidence provided by leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong safeguarding culture that permeates the school. Staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures and understand their responsibilities towards their pupils. They know to report any concerns, no matter how small.

The designated safeguarding lead is knowledgeable and extremely thorough in all aspects of safeguarding pupils. She is clear in her responsibilities, and approaches all situations in a sensitive and timely manner. Strong relationships with parents and carers and external agencies enable her to achieve positive outcomes for pupils.

Pupils are kind and polite and show respect for one another, staff and visitors. They support each other and show understanding if someone is struggling. Pupils feel safe at school. They understand that adults will make sure that they are well looked after. Pupils are clear that they all have someone they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils are very happy to attend The Forest Academy.

Behaviour around school is excellent. Staff and pupils acknowledge that, occasionally, there are incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Staff deal with these quickly and efficiently, following the behaviour policy well. Pupils understand what bullying is and state that there are no incidents of bullying at school. They are clear that, if there were to be any incidents, staff would deal with them effectively.

Parents are highly supportive of the school and appreciate the hard work that you and your staff do. Comments such as 'Moving my children to this school has proven to be the best decision we made. They have come on leaps and bounds' and 'This school is amazing, not only with the children, but parents too' are typical of those received on Parent View.

Inspection findings

- Most pupils enjoy the lively and voluntary breakfast club that is run by the school each day. During this time, pupils not only receive breakfast but have opportunities to take part in early interventions and additional learning time. Pupils go to their classrooms early, where they have access to resources which support their learning. Many take this opportunity to read quietly. The breakfast club has significantly reduced the number of late arrivals to school.
- Teachers plan lessons that are motivating, interesting and engaging. They use accurate assessment well to provide activities that are appropriately matched to pupils' needs. High-quality teaching is evident throughout the school. The consistent excellence in teaching and learning brought about by challenge and support from leaders results in pupils making strong and sustained progress.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to write at length throughout the curriculum. Pupils understand how to write, draft and edit work and the importance of this. The quality of the weekly 'publishing' writing is remarkable. Pupils specifically enjoy this and are extremely proud of their work, particularly when work is 'published' in their workbooks. Further examples of high-quality work can be seen on display throughout the school in classrooms, corridors and shared spaces.
- Pupils make very strong progress in writing and mathematics. Although progress in reading has not been as strong, current improved practice is ensuring a consistent whole-school approach. Current pupils are now making strong progress in reading. A variety of new strategies and approaches meet the needs of all pupils. The strong teaching of early phonics enables pupils to apply their skills effectively to read and understand a variety of texts.
- Pupils thrive at this school. They are excited to be at school and have extremely positive attitudes to learning. Pupils approach every lesson with enthusiasm and interest. They are ambitious and aspirational for themselves – attitudes which all leaders and staff encourage. Pupils give an impressive 10 out of 10 for all of their lessons.
- The curriculum successfully promotes pupils' enjoyment of learning. Staff choose topics carefully to match and enhance pupils' interests and needs. Staff focus strongly on authors and reading, which promotes interest in and enjoyment of reading.
- Children in the early years often arrive at the school with skills well below their age-related expectations, particularly their communication skills. High-quality teaching, planning and support mean that most children make strong progress and begin to catch up with their peers. This work continues through the early years and on into key stage 1, where outcomes are highly positive.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is very effective in making sure that pupils with SEND make strong progress at The Forest Academy. Exemplary support plans are in place to ensure that teachers and other staff provide high-quality care and help for each pupil. Pupils with SEND are fully included in lessons, with work and activities skilfully adapted by staff. This school

is an excellent example of fully inclusive practice.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff continue to receive challenge and support in order to maintain the high standards of the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Wellspring Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Barnsley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sara Roe
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you, the assistant headteachers, the safeguarding team, the SENCo and subject leaders. I also spoke to the CEO of the Wellspring Trust and five members of the governing body, including the chair and the vice-chair. I examined information about pupils' progress and looked at pupils' workbooks carefully. I checked a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, external evaluations of aspects of the school's work, minutes of meetings of the committee and safeguarding information. I considered 26 written responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. I visited all classes to observe teaching, learning and assessment. You accompanied me to all the observations. A formal discussion was held with eight pupils and I spoke more informally to pupils in lessons and around school.