Inspection of Fosse Way School

Longfellow Road, Radstock, Bath, Somerset, BA3 3AL

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 September 2021

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

This school was last inspected four years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupil and parents say Fosse Way has made a big difference to their lives. Everyone at the school shares the same ambition for pupils, that they are well prepared for their next steps. Students in the sixth form look back fondly on their time at the school. They know the school has helped them to be more confident, manage their behaviour better and gain qualifications so that they are ready for the next stage of their lives.

Strong relationships between staff and pupils are the foundation of the good work of Fosse Way School. The school is calm. Pupils are well cared for and safe.

Staff, trustees and governors are passionate that Fosse Way provides the best for its pupils and students. Leaders reviewed the curriculum to strengthen it and have developed a well-thought-out structure that is flexible, according to pupils' needs. Pupils gain knowledge and skills well. There are many rich activities, for example hydrotherapy, horse riding and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. A range of specialist approaches such as signing and symbols are used to support pupils' learning. Leaders know what they need to do to improve things even more.

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

There is a shared view at Fosse Way that the priority must be that pupils are ready for adulthood. Leaders provide a curriculum to ensure that, when pupils leave school, they can become actively involved in their community, contribute to society and live as independently as possible. Different pathways, including attending a local secondary school, allow the curriculum to be adapted to meet the needs of pupils. Leaders want all pupils to experience a broad curriculum. They work with professionals, such as speech and language therapists, to develop specialist techniques. They make sure that the pupils' targets from their education, health and care (EHC) plans inform the curriculum.

Leaders have planned carefully when different aspects of subjects are covered. There are many interesting topics. However, some expectations are not clear enough. There are inconsistencies, for example, in the priority or the amount of time that should be spent on different areas, including mathematics and reading. This means that leaders cannot accurately judge whether the curriculum is effective in building knowledge and skills over time. The tracking of EHC plan targets is very well developed. The assessment of learning in subjects is at an early stage. Leaders have introduced a new system to address this. This is still in its infancy and it is too soon to see how helpful it is.

Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. When they need support, the school provides helpful training. Teachers have specialist knowledge. They adapt their teaching to the needs and learning styles of pupils with complex needs, including those with autism spectrum disorder.

From the youngest classes, there is a sharp focus on developing pupils' communication skills. Staff use specialist approaches for those who need them. Phonics is taught well, alongside approaches to develop language and communication skills. Books are chosen carefully for pupils. Teachers provide a variety of texts to interest learners and encourage a love of reading. Extra support is in place for older pupils who need it. Pupils are motivated to read and try hard, despite their significant barriers.

The mathematics leader has ensured that the curriculum meets the needs of all learners through the school, including the early years. The curriculum ensures that key concepts and skills are carefully sequenced, building on what has been taught before. This means that pupils practise and become fluent. Activities and expectations are tailored to pupils' needs, as is additional support.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is integral to the school. The curriculum builds effectively from early years to post-16. It enables pupils to develop the knowledge and skills to achieve a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are clear how they use the skills they learn at school at home. There is a strong emphasis on developing positive relationships and learning about and managing emotions. Careers education and work experience are a high priority in the school and the sixth form. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. The onsite café and Project Search at Royal United Hospitals Bath provide opportunities to develop work skills so students are well prepared to apply for paid employment when they leave Fosse Way.

Behaviour in class is positive and focused on learning. Where pupils lose focus and concentration adults support them quickly. Pupils have detailed individual care plans that describe the specialist strategies that might be used. These are regularly reviewed and monitored. Leaders analyse trends and patterns to consider what additional help might be needed.

Staff, governors and trustees are very proud to be part of the Fosse Way community. The senior leadership team are aware of workload demands and are very supportive. Many leaders are relatively new or in temporary positions. The trust provides ongoing support to help them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are committed to the well-being of pupils and their families. This underpins the culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff are well trained. They know what to do if they are worried. Leaders work well with outside agencies to provide specialist support when it is needed. The school is aware of the issues that their pupils might face. They take appropriate action to support pupils to understand the dangers of social media. They ensure there are clear policies that staff know and understand.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders should improve the consistency of the curriculum between classes. They should determine the amount of time needed, the activities and the priorities for the different groups and implement these. They should check that the offer of individual classes builds to a coherent and progressive curriculum that enables pupils to develop sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment.
- The use of assessment in subject curriculums is in its infancy. Leaders should continue to improve the use of assessment so that it helps teachers identify clear next steps for pupils in different subjects and supports leaders in the ongoing curriculum review.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can complain to Ofsted.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	137493
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset Council
Inspection number	10203095
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	53
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Chris Nye
Headteacher	Fiona Flinn (Acting Headteacher)
Website	www.fossewayschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- Fosse Way caters for pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties. Many pupils and students have communication and language difficulties, including a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- A few Fosse Way students attend two nearby secondary schools.
- Fosse Way manages provision at the Royal United Hospital Bath, offering transition into work for final-year students.
- The school has a residential provision.
- The school currently has an acting headteacher who is supported by an executive principal and chief executive officer.

Information about this inspection

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

- The residential provision was inspected by a Social Care Regulatory Inspector at the same time.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school. They met with the executive principal, acting headteacher, staff, trustees, governors and groups of pupils. An inspector spoke with the school's leadership partner and the schools' standards director of the Partnership Trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, PSHE and music. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils and teachers, looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils read to adults.
- Inspectors looked at the policies and procedures used to keep pupils safe. They also reviewed the checks carried out by leaders on the suitability of adults who work in the school.
- Inspectors considered 35 responses to Ofsted Parent View, the online questionnaire, and 33 free-text responses.

Inspection team

Stephen McShane, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Hilary Goddard	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Leahy	Ofsted Inspector

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