

# Gloucester and Forest Alternative Provision School

Russet House, 35 Russet Close, Tuffley, Gloucester, Gloucestershire GL4 0RQ

## Inspection dates

31 January–1 February 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and those responsible for governance have not brought about the improvements needed quickly enough. Leaders have not ensured that new systems have been fully implemented and followed consistently by all staff.
- Leaders' evaluation of pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning are not rigorous. Staff are not robustly held to account for pupils' progress or the part they play in improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Members of the management committee have not been sufficiently focused on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They have not held leaders to account sufficiently.
- The quality of teaching and learning varies markedly between year groups and across the school's three centres, especially in key stages 3 and 4. Learning often lacks challenge, and teachers do not ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve, especially in their writing.
- Pupils' attendance is too low. A large proportion of pupils do not attend school on a regular basis.
- The careers advice and guidance pupils receive are limited. As a result, many of the older pupils have given insufficient thought to their next steps.
- Although increasing, too few Year 11 pupils do not continue to further education, employment or training when they leave school.

### The school has the following strengths

- The curriculum is carefully crafted to meet pupils' individual needs. The school uses a wide range of external providers to enhance pupils' experiences.
- The school's outreach service is highly effective in reducing the likelihood of pupils being excluded.
- Leaders have been successful in returning an increasing number of pupils to mainstream schools. These pupils are well supported when they return.
- The quality of teaching in key stages 1 and 2 is good. Pupils make strong progress in their reading and mathematics.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management, by:
  - ensuring that teachers are clear about leaders' expectations for the completion of the school's assessment system and that it is consistently and reliably applied
  - holding teachers to account rigorously for the progress that pupils are making
  - ensuring that the newly formed management committee is well informed about all aspects of the school's work
  - analysing information about pupils' progress and behaviour and reviewing the school's current method of self-evaluation in these areas
  - providing pupils with the careers information and guidance that they require to progress to further education, employment or training successfully
  - making sure that clear information about additional funding is provided to the management committee and that this funding, particularly for pupils who are entitled to free school meals, is used effectively to boost pupils' progress
  - ensuring that the school's website complies with requirements.
- Improving pupils' behaviour by:
  - raising pupils' attendance
  - continuing to improve the behaviour of older pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, as well as pupils' progress, by:
  - making sure that teachers challenge pupils and use information about what pupils already know, to plan work that meets their needs
  - providing opportunities for pupils to extend the quality and quantity of their writing.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The quality of leadership and management requires improvement, as leaders have not taken the necessary actions to bring about the improvements needed quickly enough. Instability in the school's leadership and a lack of strong governance to hold leaders closely to account have hampered the journey of improvement.
- Leaders are aware of the priorities for improvement and have introduced new systems, policies and expectations. However, staff have not always risen to leaders' expectations or followed the new procedures. Leaders have not held teaching staff to account rigorously enough.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning is not robust enough. The feedback they give to teachers is too often of poor quality. There is not a close enough correlation between their findings and the training that leaders plan for staff. Staff appraisal is inconsistent and therefore does not have the required impact on improving teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- The school's assessment system, 'BEST', is not rigorous enough to track pupils' progress. The system, which monitors pupils' behaviour, effort, skills and teamwork, is not providing leaders with an accurate picture of pupils' progress in each strand. This is because teaching staff have differing views on the assessment criteria and there has been insufficient moderation of teachers' judgements.
- Pupils' induction to the school is not good enough. Leaders and managers have been too swift to accept pupils onto the school's roll. This is often done without the full knowledge of the pupil's background. Records which should be provided by the pupil's previous school do not always arrive in a timely fashion.
- Under the direction of the acting headteacher, middle and senior leaders are dedicated to improving the work of the school at all sites and in the outreach service. They have built strong relationships with local school leaders to ensure that they understand the local needs and respond positively to meet these.
- The leadership of key stages 1 and 2 is particularly effective. Learning is well planned to meet pupils' needs, and the leader ensures that an orderly environment is maintained, which is conducive to good learning.
- Leaders have developed and expanded the school's outreach work. The acting headteacher and the outreach manager have a very clear strategic vision and rationale for this part of the school's work. Leaders plan carefully and ensure that the outreach team delivers a high-quality service. The outreach team has had a substantial impact in the last 12 months, reducing the need for mainstream schools to exclude pupils.
- Leaders have designed bespoke study programmes for each pupil. They employ specialist external providers when school-based staff do not have the skills or expertise that are needed to meet the pupil's needs. They carefully vet these providers and check that pupils make good progress, attend and behave well.
- Leaders arrange a wide range of experiences to further pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare them for some of the risks they may face. These

are subtly delivered, but are taken on board by pupils. Pupils commented positively about their learning from visits, such as their visits to the woodlands at Beechenhurst Lodge and Slimbridge Wetland Centre, where they develop their understanding of the environment.

## Governance of the school

- The arrangements for governance changed during this inspection. Some of the members of the previous management committee, which oversaw all three alternative provision schools in Gloucestershire, have moved to the new management committee for this school. The previous management committee was dissolved on 31 January 2018.
- The members of the new management committee are wholly committed to the school and the services that it offers. They have the necessary skills and experience to carry out their duties. However, in the past, they have not been sufficiently focused on holding leaders to account for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' behaviour or the outcomes for pupils. They have not ensured that the school's website complies fully with the requirements.
- Committee members have allocated funds wisely to improve the fabric of the buildings at Joy's Green and in appointing new senior leaders. Through these appointments, committee members have been able to ensure improvements in pupils' behaviour and attitudes at Joy's Green and Russet House.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are highly attuned to possible safeguarding risks to pupils, such as from exposure to drug abuse and sexual exploitation. Staff work well together to identify any pupils who may be vulnerable. Pupils who were spoken to during the inspection all said that they feel safe and could talk to an adult who would help them.
- Senior leaders ensure that all the required checks are made on the suitability of adults to work with pupils. Staff work well with external agencies and are well trained to spot the signs and symptoms of abuse.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across sites and year groups. As a result, pupils in key stages 3 and 4 do not have the opportunities they need to develop their skills, particularly in their writing. This is particularly the case at the Raikes Centre.
- Leaders have introduced a common assessment system across all sites and year groups. However, some members of staff lack clarity about the assessment criteria. Consequently, the interpretation of the assessment criteria is too variable and the reliability of some information cannot be assured.
- The assessment of pupils' academic ability on entry is weak in many subjects, particularly in key stages 3 and 4. Information from pupils' previous schools is often

very late, if it arrives at all. Leaders have not been assiduous enough in ensuring that pupils' previous schools provide the information necessary so that pupils make progress in their academic studies from the start. However, the school's transition programme provides rich information about pupils' personal needs and behaviours.

- Pupils are not sufficiently clear about how to progress their work to achieve higher grades in key stage 4. Leaders have organised training recently that has focused on the use of assessment criteria in learning. This is very recent and its impact is yet to be seen across the school.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils on their work is of variable quality. In some classes, pupils find it useful and take it on board, improving their work as a result. This does not routinely happen in all subjects. Recognising this, leaders have raised their expectations of how teachers help pupils move their learning on.
- Pupils' accuracy in their spelling, grammar and use of punctuation is weak. Errors go unchecked by teachers and so pupils continue to make the same mistakes.
- In some subjects, pupils are not routinely required to improve their work or catch up on work they have missed. As a result, there are gaps in their knowledge and they often lack the depth of understanding they need.
- Pupils at Joy's Green reported that expectations were low in the past. These have risen, and markedly so, since September 2017. Their work and attitudes to learning confirm this.
- Teachers have forged strong relationships with pupils. They have successfully created a culture where pupils are, or are becoming, ready to learn. Teachers use these good relationships effectively to engage pupils in learning.
- Teaching in key stage 1 and 2 is much stronger. Teaching staff have an accurate view of what pupils know, understand and can do when they arrive at the school. From this, they plan learning carefully, which helps pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding and is well matched to their needs.
- Pupils in key stage 1 have strong reading skills. They read fluently and show interest in the text. This is maintained into key stage 2, though the most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently in their reading.
- Across the school, teachers show good subject knowledge which most use well to craft learning so that pupils make progress. However, this is not always the case in key stages 3 and 4.
- Pupils who attend other providers for some or all of the week benefit from those learning environments and receive the support they need to make progress. The school receives detailed information about their progress regularly.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.

- Some pupils in key stages 3 and 4 do not show positive attitudes to learning in all of their subjects. Teaching staff do not always manage this well and so pupils do not concentrate on the learning that is planned for them.
- Leaders have made provision for independent careers guidance for staff and developed opportunities to discuss careers with pupils. The quality of careers education and the impact it has in helping pupils to identify the careers they are interested in exploring are not strong. Consequently, too many Year 11 pupils do not continue to employment, further education or training when they leave school.
- Staff are vigilant and sensitive to pupils' welfare needs. They have a good understanding of each pupil and their family and have built strong relationships and trust with pupils. Consequently, pupils have adults they can confide in and feel safe when at school.
- Leaders have invested in improving pupils' emotional development and their resilience. Through this approach, the school has developed a nurturing environment where pupils can understand and manage their emotions and behaviours better.
- Leaders' use of alternative provision, for example through the engagement of specialist mentoring services, is having a positive impact on improving the life chances of pupils who have the most troubled backgrounds. Leaders know where the pupils are, what they are learning and that they are safe.
- The school's programme for personal, social and health education, 'Mindcraft', is supporting pupils' cultural, spiritual, social and emotional development and their understanding of British values well. The school's physical education programme, which makes use of the extensive facilities at Hartpury College, is successful in developing pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils' attendance, while improving and better than when the pupils were in their previous schools, is still too low. The number of pupils who are regularly absent is very high. Leaders' actions are having limited impact on improving attendance.
- Some pupils in key stage 3 and 4 display behaviours, such as swearing, that fall below the school's expectations. Some members of staff do not manage pupils' behaviour well. Pupils continue to swear. This is particularly the case at the Raikes Centre.
- Leaders are creative in developing engaging opportunities for pupils to apply their learning and develop employability skills. The creation of a café at Joy's Green and the opening of 'The Vines Project' at Raikes Centre are having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes.
- Teaching staff are no longer routinely restraining pupils. This is the combined result of pupils understanding how to deal with their anger, alongside staff recognising the triggers which heighten pupils' anxiety levels and taking preventative actions.
- Incidents of pupils misbehaving are reducing, although these are still too high. Leaders have analysed patterns and trends in behaviour incidents. From this, they have made

changes to the curriculum and organisation which have improved pupils' behaviour and reduced the number of exclusions.

- The outreach service for pupils in mainstream settings who are at risk of exclusion, and for those pupils returning to mainstream schools, is highly effective. Through the team's work, pupils' attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning are all improving. This is reducing the number of exclusions from mainstream settings and ensuring that those pupils who return to mainstream schools are successful.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in key stage 3, and to a lesser extent in key stage 4, has not been as strong in their academic studies. Pupils often struggle to recall work done previously or to relate their learning in one subject to that in another.
- Pupils who leave the school at the end of Year 11, many of whom have attended the school for some time, do not leave with the higher grades in their studies that they are capable of. Too many of these pupils do not continue to further education, employment or training when they leave the school.
- Personal education plans for children who are looked after are poor. They are not fully completed and targets are not specific or monitored in a timely fashion. As a result, these children do not make the accelerated progress they should.
- Progress in key stage 2 is stronger, and most pupils make steady progress in their reading and mathematics. However, their progress in writing is much more limited and, in 2017, no pupil in Year 6 reached the expected standard for their age in writing.
- Current pupils, in all key stages, are making better progress in many subjects. They have sustained the progress they make in reading and mathematics in key stage 2, and, in key stage 4, progress in mathematics is being accelerated. There are no notable differences between pupils who are eligible for free school meals and their classmates.
- Pupils who have education, health and care plans have tightly set targets which are well matched to pupils' needs. These are carefully tracked. Pupils understand their targets and make good progress against these. As a result, these pupils often achieve strong outcomes.
- The majority of pupils make good progress in their personal and emotional development. As a result, year on year, more pupils are leaving the school, successfully returning to mainstream education.
- Pupils who are supported by the school's outreach team are making strong progress against their targets, which are carefully set. The 'Space to Shine' project, a project for pupils at risk of exclusion in mainstream settings, has been particularly effective and has reduced the number of pupils being excluded from their mainstream school.

## School details

|                         |                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Unique reference number | 135330          |
| Local authority         | Gloucestershire |
| Inspection number       | 10037069        |

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

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Type of school                      | Pupil referral unit  |
| School category                     | Pupil referral unit  |
| Age range of pupils                 | 4 to 16  |
| Gender of pupils                    | Mixed  |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 77   |
| Appropriate authority               | The management committee   |
| Chair                               | Peter Rowland  |
| Acting Headteacher                  | Elisa Entwistle  |
| Telephone number                    | 01452 528955   |
| Website                             | <a href="http://www.gfaps.gloucs.sch.uk">www.gfaps.gloucs.sch.uk</a>     |
| Email address                       | <a href="mailto:admin@gfaps.gloucs.sch.uk">admin@gfaps.gloucs.sch.uk</a> |
| Date of previous inspection         | 12–13 March 2015   |

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the school's curriculum, the sport premium or governance arrangements.
- Gloucester and Forest Alternative Provision School caters for pupils who have been permanently excluded or who are at risk of being excluded. The school operates on three sites. Russet House, in Gloucester, provides education for key stage 4 pupils. The Raikes Centre includes a primary department for pupils in key stages 1 and 2, a secondary department for pupils in key stages 3 and 4, and The Vines Project. The Vines Project supports older pupils who present some of the most challenging behaviours. The centre at Joy's Green in the Forest of Dean, accommodates pupils from key stages 2, 3 and 4.
- Pupils arrive throughout the year through referral from the local authority, usually as the result of permanent exclusion from a mainstream school.

- All pupils have some specific need associated with past schooling or personal circumstances. Most have social, emotional or mental health needs. All pupils have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Most pupils have an education, health and care plan or are about to obtain one.
- There were no children in the Reception Year at the time of the inspection.
- The school's outreach team works with pupils in mainstream schools who are either at risk of exclusion or are returning to mainstream schools after a period at the school.
- The school uses a wide range of external providers. These include A+bility, Artspace, Bridge Training, Gloucester Youth Project (GYP), Herefordshire Vocational Training, Impact Mentoring, Inspyre Plus, Phil Gomm Mentoring, ProSystems Training Services and TMS Mentoring.
- The governance of the school changed during this inspection. The previous management committee, which oversaw the work of the three alternative provision schools in Gloucestershire, was dissolved. On 1 February 2018, a new management committee was constituted, which will oversee the work of Gloucester and Forest Alternative Provision School solely.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across all three centres, covering all year groups and in a wide range of subjects. In these lessons, inspectors also took the opportunity to look carefully at pupils' work and talk to them about their experiences at the school. Often, inspectors were accompanied by members of the school's leadership team.
- Further work scrutiny was undertaken to assess pupils' progress over time.
- Inspectors visited or spoke with external providers that are regularly used by the school. One inspector visited a mainstream school to observe the work of the outreach team reintegrating a pupil into mainstream education.
- Inspectors held discussions with the acting headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and teaching and administration staff.
- The lead inspector also met with three members of the new management committee and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, information about pupils' achievement, behaviour records, minutes of the management committee meetings, school policies, pupils' files and safeguarding documents.
- Inspectors considered the five responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also reviewed the 62 responses to the online survey of pupils and those of 68 members of staff at the school.

## Inspection team

|                               |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Iain Freeland, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Jen Edwards                   | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Andrew Brown                  | Ofsted Inspector        |

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

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