

Furze Platt Senior School

Furze Platt Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 7NQ

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has led the improvement of the school ably. She has ensured that there are strong, effective systems of accountability in place to address the weaknesses identified at the last inspection.
- Governors, senior and middle leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance. They are taking effective steps to improve the progress made by disadvantaged pupils.
- The sixth form is a strength of the school. Students achieve well and are good role models for younger pupils.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and careful attention to ensuring good-quality feedback helps pupils to learn well.
- Pupils achieve standards that are above average, especially in English and mathematics.
- Pupils are able to pursue their next steps with confidence because careers information, advice and guidance are well matched to the needs, interests and abilities of pupils.
- Pupils are polite, mature and supportive of each other. They behave very well and know how to keep themselves safe. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The attendance of a small group of disadvantaged pupils, while improving, is not high enough.
- Teaching is not yet of the highest quality. A small amount of teaching does not challenge pupils to learn well, particularly the most able.
- Despite improving outcomes, progress for some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not improving at the same rate as for other pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further reduce the rates of persistent absence among disadvantaged pupils.
- Address remaining inconsistencies in teaching and learning so that all pupils continue to achieve well, by:
 - sharpening senior and middle leader monitoring to include a focus on improving the outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that teachers offer more consistent challenge to pupils across the school, particularly the most able.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school is very well led. The highly skilled headteacher has a clear vision that all pupils should achieve well. Supported by her able leadership team she leads improvements which raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, so that pupils in this school achieve highly.
- Leaders work more effectively than at the time of the last inspection because their roles are clearer and more sharply focused. Leaders at all levels are held to account more closely for the progress of all groups of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged. Staff and parents who completed the online Ofsted questionnaires are overwhelmingly supportive of the leaders' work.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress because teachers are well trained in meeting their specific needs. Leaders have successfully made this a top priority. Both senior and subject leaders use their regular checks on the quality of teaching to highlight areas for improvement with individual teachers and then address them through well-tailored support and robust challenge.
- Leaders recognised that, previously, pupils did not progress as rapidly through key stage 3 as they should. Recent changes to the curriculum are designed to accelerate the progress of pupils in Years 7 and 8. At GCSE and A level, the curriculum promotes equal opportunities as more vocational subjects are available and the most able pupils now study a broader range of subjects. As a result, pupils are making better progress this year.
- Leaders check to make sure that extra support for pupils who need to catch up is making a difference. The Year 7 catch-up premium (additional government funding for pupils who did not reach the expected levels in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6) is used well to improve progress in mathematics, reading and writing. Targeted pupils now read well and are better able to access the curriculum.
- Pupils' personal, social and health needs are promoted well through a broad range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy many different sporting and creative activities, which parents comment positively on. A number of pupils told inspectors that they were especially excited to have begun rehearsing for the new school play. Some extra-curricular activities are specifically designed to challenge pupils and deepen their learning, especially the most able pupils, such as the Maths Challenge and Green Power club.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed. High-quality assemblies and focused tutor periods help raise aspirations and foster a wider appreciation of opportunities for future study and employment. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain, showing awareness of current political issues such as the recent referendum on membership of the European Union, how to keep safe on the internet and the dangers of radicalisation.
- Leaders use funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities increasingly effectively. The special educational needs coordinator ensures that teachers know the individual needs of pupils, and learning support assistants work well to support pupils with additional teaching in lessons and outside of normal lesson times. Progress for this group of pupils has begun to accelerate, although leaders agree that the impact of some changes is still to be seen.

- Leaders make sure that the very small minority of pupils who require some alternative provision to best meet their needs are well catered for. Leaders check frequently to make sure that pupils attend regularly and make progress.
- The headteacher and school leaders have shown determination to improve the performance of disadvantaged pupils. They have made this ambition clear to all staff, and pupil premium funding is used well. Disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 last year made much better progress, because teachers knew who they were and what support they needed. The school's performance information, and work in pupils' books, shows that current disadvantaged pupils are making good progress throughout the curriculum and across all years.
- A very large majority of pupils, parents and staff are confident in the school's leadership, praising leaders' rapid response to concerns raised, and the work leaders do to prepare pupils for joining Year 7.
- Leaders have worked effectively to recruit teachers with good subject knowledge, in spite of challenges. Governors are actively recruiting new teachers to replace those who left late in the academic year.

Governance of the school

- Governance has strengthened since the last inspection. The governing body makes an increasingly effective contribution to the overall leadership of the school.
- Governors have wide-ranging expertise and skills which they use effectively to hold the headteacher to account for the progress of all pupils.
- Governors participate in training to enhance their skills. Restructured committees and regular visits to school enable governors to check and support different aspects of the school's work more precisely.
- Governors support improvements in teaching and learning by rewarding good teaching and challenging underperformance through pay reviews.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff and governors' training is up to date. The pastoral team supports vulnerable pupils and their families well. Appropriate processes are in place to keep pupils safe, including online. Virtually all parents who responded to the online Parent View questionnaire said they feel their children are safe in school.
- Leaders responded swiftly to address the concerns in the last report about the safety of building works, which have now been completed. Pupils reported that they appreciate the improved safety of the site, for example the new electronic gates at the front of the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching and learning is strong. Teachers' strong subject knowledge and good behaviour management skills help pupils to learn effectively. Teachers use a wide range of techniques to help pupils expand and challenge their thinking so that they can discuss their learning with confidence. This is especially the case in English and in the sixth form. For example, in one Year 12 lesson the teacher's skilful questioning led to a high-level debate about gender stereotyping in sport.

- Pupils are supported well by high-quality verbal and written feedback which is clearly focused on the particular needs of the individual. This ensures that pupils know what to learn next. Pupils understand how to use feedback to improve their learning.
- Teachers work closely with leaders to ensure that their assessments of pupils' progress are accurate and are used to help plan future learning. Performance information is collected regularly and used to identify pupils who need extra support. This is particularly strong in Year 11 as pupils prepare for their exams, and at the start of Year 7 to help pupils who join the school at below national levels to catch up.
- In the large majority of lessons there are positive relationships between teachers and pupils, which pupils say have improved since the last inspection. Teachers know the differing needs of pupils, and give them the extra support they need to succeed. Pupils value knowing that teachers will go out of their way to help them.
- Pupils take pride in their work. This is reflected in their books, which are usually very well presented, and in the respectful attitudes shown to each other and the staff around the school.
- The school has a specialist resource base for pupils with autism. This base is known as 'Shine'. Teaching and learning for pupils in the unit is sharply focused on meeting the individual needs of pupils. Well-trained staff use their expertise to skilfully prepare pupils to learn well during their lessons in the main school. Pupils working in the Shine base showed confidence and a determination to succeed.
- Sometimes, teachers do not use the information that they have about pupils' starting points to plan learning which challenges and supports pupils effectively. This is particularly the case for some of the most able pupils who do not achieve as highly as they could, and for some pupils with special educational needs who need additional help to access learning.
- Teachers carefully consider pupils' needs. As a result all groups of pupils have an equal opportunity to achieve well. This could be further refined for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Some teachers move pupils on to new learning before the current topic has been fully understood, or allow too much time for activities that pupils do not find challenging. When this happens, pupils lose focus and their progress slows.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Teachers and pastoral leaders have created a happy community where pupils are respectful of each other's views and opinions. The school works closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils with difficulties are well supported.
- A small minority of parents who responded to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, were concerned about bullying. However, pupils in school said that it was very rare and was dealt with swiftly by teachers.
- Pupils broaden their understanding of the modern world and prepare well for future life and work through a range of activities both in and out of lessons. Assemblies deliver strong moral and spiritual messages which pupils explore further during tutor periods. They understand and respect the differences in people's backgrounds and beliefs.

- The quality of careers information, advice and guidance is strong. Pupils value the support from the independent careers adviser and the annual careers fair which helps them make informed choices about the next stages of their education. Through prioritising disadvantaged pupils for individual advice, leaders ensure that these pupils are well informed about future options. As a result, increasingly high numbers of pupils continue on to education, training or employment at the end of key stage 4.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They speak with maturity about their opportunities to mix with pupils from different year groups. Pupils respect each other's differences, one pupil saying 'everyone should be treated how they want to be treated'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils are smart, polite and mature. Pupils are supportive of each other; older pupils 'buddy' younger ones when they join the school to make sure they settle in well.
- Leaders have worked well with pupils who struggle to attend school regularly so that attendance overall is good and improving. Leaders acknowledge that more work needs to be done to ensure that pupils who are persistently absent attend more often, especially a small group of disadvantaged pupils. However, this group's attendance is improving because of leaders' effective actions.
- Good behaviour in lessons contributes to good learning. Pupils respond well to challenging teaching and take pride in their work. However, on the rare occasions when teaching is weaker, expectations and behaviour slip.
- The atmosphere in the Shine base is calm and purposeful. Pupils socialise well outside of the base, and when in the mainstream school they maintain their good behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' achievement is good and improving across a wide range of subjects. Pupils join the school with broadly average attainment. In 2015, pupils' achievement in many subjects was significantly above the national average. Unvalidated examination results for 2016 show that pupils' attainment and progress at key stage 4 have improved still further.
- Current pupils make good progress. Pupils' work and the school's assessment information demonstrates little difference between the achievement of pupils who are disadvantaged and those who are not. This is as a result of a sharp focus by leaders on improving teaching and interventions for this group.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils making good progress in English and mathematics, and across the curriculum, is improving rapidly. Differences between disadvantaged pupils and others with the same starting points nationally are diminishing as a result of a sharp focus by leaders in ensuring that all teachers know the individual needs of these pupils, and additional teaching for those in danger of falling behind.
- The most able pupils make similar or greater progress than other pupils nationally, across a broad range of subjects, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. Where this is not the case, such as in modern foreign languages, progress has improved since the last inspection. Unvalidated 2016 examination results show that an increased number of pupils achieved top grades at key stage 4 this year, as a result of ongoing

careful attention by leaders to provide increased challenge for the most able pupils.

- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved since the last inspection so that it is now close to national averages. Teachers and teaching assistants generally provide good-quality extra teaching to support these pupils. However, the work of some of these pupils showed that they had not made the same good start to the year as other pupils.
- Pupils working in the Shine base make good progress from their starting points and attain relevant qualifications which support their transition into the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Pastoral leaders work closely with their colleagues so that there are effective systems in place to ensure that pupils who achieve alternative provision gain good qualifications in the courses they study. Pupils studying vocational courses appreciated these courses for helping to prepare them for future work.
- Leaders focus on developing pupils' reading. The learning resource area is well used to support learning and foster a love of reading by a vast range of pupils from Year 7 to Year 13. Leaders meet with local primary school teachers to increase their understanding of what pupils can do when they start the school. Information from the school's reading programme shows that the majority of pupils who need to catch up are doing so with effective support from teachers.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- At the end of 2015, the school met both the academic and vocational minimum standards. Students made very strong progress in both academic and vocational subjects. Unvalidated 2016 results show that progress in academic subjects has improved further. The proportion of A* and A grades has also increased.
- The 16 to 19 study programme offers students the opportunity to choose from a wide choice of academic and vocational courses. Previously, some students did not achieve as well as they could as they followed courses which were not consistently well matched to their needs. From September 2016, the pathways offered to pupils have been adjusted to build more successfully on students' starting points. One pathway offers a combination of academic and vocational subjects. Other academic pathways provide increased rigour and challenge for the most able students. Students who have not yet achieved GCSE English and mathematics at grade C or above are supported and follow an effective programme of study to improve their understanding further.
- Leaders have high expectations. The head of the sixth form carefully tracks students' progress and identifies those who are in danger of falling behind. He works with subject teachers and tutors to support individual academic and pastoral needs. This helps current students to make strong progress.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. During the inspection, teachers' strong subject knowledge, high expectations and skilful questioning were extending students' learning well.
- Students enjoy life in the sixth form and they feel safe and secure. They welcome the opportunity to contribute to the wider aspects of life in school, for example by raising money for charity and participating in school plays. The school's vertical tutor system enables sixth form students to mentor and support younger pupils. They provide excellent role models for younger pupils.

- The development of students' wider skills and their preparation for life in modern Britain is a strength of the sixth form. An impressive extra-curricular and tutorial programme challenges students' thinking about moral and social issues and encourages mature debate.
- The school has a broad programme of careers education and guidance for sixth form students, which includes advice about apprenticeships as well as university education. The work experience arranged by Year 12 students helps to improve their employability skills. All students who left the school in 2015 went on to further education, employment or training, with an increasing proportion of students taking up places at the Russell group of universities. Evidence indicates a similar pattern for last year's Year 13 cohort.

School details

Unique reference number	137740
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	10021146

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1246
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gavin Tisshaw
Headteacher	Ms Tanya White
Telephone number	01628 625 308
Website	http://www.furzeplatt.com
Email address	office@furzeplatt.com
Date of previous inspection	11–12 February 2015

Information about this school

- Furze Platt Senior School is a larger than average secondary school for 11–18-year-olds.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is lower than the national average.
- The school has a slightly larger than average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. There is a slightly lower than average proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well above the national average.

- The school has an Autism Resource Area (called Shine) for a maximum of 15 pupils.
- A small number of pupils attend an alternative provision at Activate Haybrook College and RISE.
- The school complies with DfE guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school achieved well above the floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 36 lessons and seven part-lessons across a range of year groups and subjects. Some lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, other staff, governors and pupils. Inspectors took account of 86 responses to the confidential questionnaires received from staff. They also telephoned leaders of alternative provision.
- Inspectors evaluated key documents, including the school's strategic planning documents, external reviews carried out by governors, minutes of meetings, reports of attendance and behaviour, and records related to pupils' safety and academic progress.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school and during breaktime.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account the 158 responses to the online Ofsted parent questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also considered the 151 free text responses. Response to the online questionnaire completed by 189 pupils were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Matthew Haynes	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mark Goode	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kay Leach	Ofsted Inspector
Mary Davies	Ofsted Inspector

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