

Forest Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100745
Local Authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	354882
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Samantha Morgan-Price HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1447
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carol Quast
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Brady
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2007
School address	Dacres Road Lewisham SE23 2XN
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The number of lessons observed was 50; an equivalent number of teachers were seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at many documents including: the whole school, and subject, self-evaluations; reports from the School Improvement Partner; records of lesson observations; curriculum and safeguarding information; and records of vulnerable students. They considered the responses in 161 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as pupil and staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The current achievement of all students in 2011, especially those eligible for free school meals, Black Caribbean and those less-able.
- The care, guidance and support for students, especially those most vulnerable.
- The actions of all leaders and managers in driving up achievement and improving students' outcomes

Information about the school

Forest Hill is a larger-than-average oversubscribed school where students live within a geographically small area. Over 60% of students come from ethnically diverse origins. Students of Black Caribbean heritage make up a fifth of the school's population. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Over a third of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities; this is significantly higher than seen nationally. The school received specialist performing arts college status in 2004. Forest Hill is an 11-16 all-boys school, with a mixed sixth form.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

One student summarised how he and others felt about the support he received from the school in the comment, 'everyone in the school, including people on reception, always take the time to help us'. Forest Hill School is an extremely caring and supportive school. The level of care, guidance and support given to students is exemplary. The work of the school's panel to safeguard the well-being of the most vulnerable students is excellent. A significant amount of time is spent in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities; as a consequence these students progress as well as their peers. Students say they feel extremely safe and well supported. The responsibility of safeguarding students' well-being is shared by all staff. Outstanding procedures have been implemented, including the robust scrutiny of policies and processes by the member of the governing body responsible for safeguarding and child protection. The excellent partnerships the school has forged contribute extremely well to this.

There have been many changes to the quality of provision since the last inspection and in response to the disappointing GCSE results in 2010. This has enabled students to make good progress in their learning both in the main school and the sixth form. Black Caribbean and less-able students are achieving as well as their peers. There has also been some improvement in the achievement of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, although leaders recognise that more work needs to be done to ensure all are achieving as well as they can. Leaders have responded well to the developing needs of the students. The good mix of more appropriate qualifications has enabled students to improve their attainment in GCSE and A level examinations.

The good teaching and curriculum have contributed well to students' good achievement. The school's specialism pervades the school. It has a very positive impact on attainment for students who study dance, drama and music. The specialism provides students with a broad range of curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities within school and the community. Participation rates are very high and the school monitors participation by groups effectively. The school has been described by the local authority as, 'influencing the community culture of Lewisham'. This contributes extremely well to students' excellent social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. They are becoming more confident, developing excellent skills of oracy and debate and have good access to the arts. They appreciate the extensive extra-curricular programme that the school offers.

Overall, teaching does provide a strong platform for students to learn well. A fifth of lessons seen were outstanding; however there is still a significant proportion of lessons that are satisfactory rather than good. In the stronger lessons, the use of peer assessment is well developed and students have good opportunities to develop their discussions of their learning activities. Where learning tasks are matched to students' abilities, students are enthusiastic and extremely engaged; this leads to them working hard to complete the

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challenges set in their work. Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally good, although there is off-task behaviour when they are not effectively challenged. In the weaker lessons, teachers do not always make good use of students' performance data to pitch lessons appropriately. In some of these lessons, questioning or teaching strategies do not always challenge the more able. The quality of marked work varies. Some excellent marking was seen in some subjects, but this is not consistent across subjects or throughout the school.

Leaders and managers have not stood still. Under the decisive and caring leadership of the headteacher, they have addressed the disappointing GCSE results of 2010 and significant changes have been made to the curriculum at both Key Stages 3 and 4, although some are yet to be fully realised. Leaders have identified the key priorities in their self-evaluation. Pertinent actions have been taken to address underperformance in most subjects. Leaders recognise that although there is a firm understanding of what is required to bring about more consistent teaching, the pace of some of the actions implemented has been slow. However, the good improvement in attainment, the excellent care, guidance and support, especially for more vulnerable students, and the changes within the curriculum enable the school to demonstrate a good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in Key Stage 4, by July 2012, by
 - improving teachers' use of students' performance data to inform their lesson planning and create more challenging learning outcomes
 - sharing the good practice of outstanding teachers more effectively so that a higher proportion of lessons are good
 - raising the standard of weaker marking up to that of the best.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enter the school with attainment levels which are broadly average. Attainment in drama was significantly better than the national average in 2010. Current students are making good progress and the school predicts a strong rise in attainment by the end of the summer term. Students value the opportunities to work together in lessons; in the best lessons seen they were given many opportunities to develop independent skills and to use peer assessment to identify how well they were progressing.

The excellent opportunities afforded by the school's specialism enable students to participate in many performing arts extra-curricular activities and to make a good contribution to the local community by organising and delivering events such as theatre performances. Although students make a positive contribution to the school's work through the student council, they would welcome the opportunity to contribute further to improve the quality of provision, especially teaching. They develop a good awareness of how to maintain healthy lifestyles.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Opportunities for students to discuss their work are developing well across the school and the use of peer assessment is well developed in some subjects. Teachers' use of questioning is not always effective in assessing how well students have learnt. In the weaker lessons where learning is not matched to students' needs their behaviour and enjoyment is not as good as in the majority of lessons.

The school's curriculum is organised well, based on robust self-evaluation. It is broad, balanced and flexible allowing for personalisation. Curriculum changes have been strongly influenced by recent results and the senior leaders' detailed knowledge of the needs of the school's upcoming students. For example, there has been debate about whether, based on previous results and the current year 9 students, more vocational programmes could be introduced in some subjects to complement the GCSE provision. The new Key Stage 4 curriculum means that students are no longer led into a pathway but can mix and match from a wide range of academic and vocational options. A new Key Stage 3 curriculum is planned to be introduced in September 2011 with a change of emphasis for the highest ability cohort. In addition to those opportunities provided by the specialism, activities in sports, information and communication technology, engineering and competitions provide students with a varied and enjoyable programme of extra-curricular opportunities.

Teachers know the needs of their students well and the tracking and support for students, including those who are more vulnerable, are exemplary. The focused ASPIRE programme

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for Black Caribbean students has improved their achievement well. Thorough analysis of students' needs in Year 9 enable them to make appropriate course choices in Key Stage 4. The level of students' attendance has improved to above average and the school has good strategies in place to maintain this.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have shared their vision for improvement of the school well to all staff. Leaders and managers have worked hard to address the dip in GCSE results in 2010. The changes made to the middle leadership team have enabled good measures to be put in place that have led to marked improvements, particularly in the curriculum. Despite strategies implemented to improve teaching and assessment, these are still yet to have a full impact on all subjects as the best practice in teaching is not yet shared effectively across the whole school. The systems to ensure the safety and well-being of students are highly effective. The work undertaken to improve the attainment of Black Caribbean and less-able students has brought about good improvement. The school has worked hard to remove the barriers to learning, and tackles discrimination well. One of the continuing priorities of the school is to ensure that all students who are eligible for free school meals achieve as well as they can. The school promotes community cohesion well, although leaders recognise more work needs to be done to engage with other faiths and to develop a more cohesive understanding of the school's successes and areas for further development. The governing body has taken many good actions to develop their ability to challenge the school. They support the work of the school well. Governors linked to subjects are providing good scrutiny of performance within these subject areas. The governors' skills audit undertaken enables them to be employed more effectively.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Standards in the sixth form are broadly average and the school's data for attainment in 2011 demonstrate good improvement. Students make good progress in the sixth form, particularly those who are more able. The numbers continuing into higher education is high and recently there have been a significant number of students accepting places at Russell group universities.

Teaching contributes well to the good progress students make in their learning. There are increased opportunities for independent working and to develop skills of analysis and evaluation. Working in groups is highly effective in enabling students to develop their understanding of learning and to have opportunities for debate. The school provides a wide range of courses within the sixth form. The school has recently altered the make-up of its provision for good reasons, including the variability and accountability of outside providers, although the school is yet to benefit fully from the reorganisation of the local consortium. Attendance is above average and pupils readily take responsibility for their own well-being. Retention rates are high as students move from AS to A level.

Students enjoy being at the school, for many reasons, including the freedom and independence that the sixth form gives them and the new accommodation that provides a good learning environment.

The head of the sixth form is very committed to improving students' outcomes. He has a clear understanding of the key actions needed to improve outcomes further. Although there are good quality data these are not used as effectively as possible to analyse trends in attainment. The general strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form are well known and there are clear plans for more robust monitoring to enable all students to achieve their targets.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded were in agreement with the majority of statements in the questionnaire, with the large majority feeling that the school keeps their child safe and informs them of their child's progress. Fewer parents and carers feel that the school helps their child to have a healthy lifestyle or that it takes account of their suggestions or concerns. The inspection team did not conclude this from its findings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Forest Hill School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 161 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1447 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	41	76	47	8	5	4	2
The school keeps my child safe	70	43	82	51	5	3	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	72	45	82	51	4	2	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	52	32	85	53	13	8	6	4
The teaching is good at this school	58	36	91	57	8	5	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	36	85	53	11	7	4	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	25	95	59	17	11	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	55	34	90	56	3	2	5	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	30	86	53	5	3	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	67	42	80	50	9	6	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	24	90	56	14	9	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	68	42	80	50	7	4	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	81	50	67	42	6	4	6	4

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



10 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Forest Hill School, London, SE23 2XN

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We now know that you enjoy attending school and that you work hard. We also know you feel extremely safe while at school. The inspection team was particularly impressed with the confident and articulate responses to our questions.

We judged your school to be good in most respects. You make good progress to achieve average standards in your GCSEs and A levels. The sixth form standards are improving well. You make effective progress for many reasons: teaching is good and the curriculum is effective in meeting your needs. The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for you to achieve well, especially the most vulnerable students.

While at school, you have good opportunities to develop as individuals as well as develop relationships with your peers and teachers. You are motivated to learn and contribute well to your lessons. Your attendance is above average. The school provides you with highly effective support and advice. The school also prepares you well for your future lives. You demonstrate excellent social, moral, spiritual and cultural skills in the main from the excellent opportunities the school provides through the performing arts specialism and sports opportunities.

Your caring headteacher leads and manages the school well. Your managers and teachers have ensured that your achievement is improving. The excellent partnerships the school has forged help the senior teachers improve your outcomes. Your leaders and managers have plans of how they want to improve the work of the school to make it even better. The inspection team did recognise that there were some points that the school needs to address. Therefore, we have asked the school to:

raise the standards you attain in your GCSEs by July 2012 by

- improving the way that staff use information about your performance data to plan lessons more effectively and create more challenging learning outcomes for you
- sharing the good practice of outstanding teachers more effectively so that a higher proportion of lessons are good or better
- ensuring that all marking is of the same quality as the best.

Yours sincerely

Samantha Morgan-Price
Her Majesty's Inspector

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