

Forest Hill School

Dacres Road, Lewisham, London, SE23 2XN.

Inspection dates 12–13 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Students make good progress in English and mathematics from their starting points which are often below average. By the end of Year 11, attainment is comfortably above average standards.
- Teaching over time is good and increasingly of high quality. Teachers know the students well and plan activities which interest and challenge them.
- Students from different groups, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those who receive additional funding, make good progress. Their needs are quickly understood and high quality support is put in place.
- The school provides excellent opportunities to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It uses its expertise in performing arts well to help students develop as reflective, caring, thoughtful individuals.
- Students are very keen to learn. Most have excellent attitudes to learning and behave very well. They embrace responsibilities and willingly become mentors to help other students.
- The school's leaders have kept an exceptionally sharp and very successful focus on raising standards by continuing to improve the quality of teaching across the school. They make regular checks on students' progress and hold all staff accountable for their achievement.
- The governors know the school extremely well and are highly effective in challenging the staff to raise standards even further.
- The sixth form is good. Achievement is improving and students are making good progress. Some students do exceptionally well and university entry rates are high.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most-able students do not achieve as well in English and science, as they do in mathematics.
- Teachers do not always check and encourage students to respond to written marking comments.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 52 lessons or parts of lessons, including additional support provided through intervention work. There were 18 joint observations with school leaders. Inspectors also visited two school assemblies and tutor time for different groups of students.
- Meetings were held with various senior and middle leaders, with the Chair of the Governing Body plus three other governors, the school’s improvement adviser and a representative from the local authority.
- Students’ views were sought informally throughout the inspection, during lessons and break times.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents. These included the school’s own data on students’ progress, policies, planning and monitoring information.
- Inspectors paid close attention to school information on attendance, behaviour and all aspects of safeguarding.
- Parents’ and carers’ views were taken into account through the 88 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and the school’s own parent surveys. They also received parents’ comments by phone and email messages.

Inspection team

Aune Turkson-Jones, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Heidi Boreham	Additional Inspector
Michael O’Sullivan	Additional Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional Inspector
David Webster	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized secondary school and shares its sixth form provision with Sydenham School for Girls. A small number of boys attend Lewisham College to pursue their vocational courses.
- The majority of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups and the proportion speaking English as an additional language is slightly above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding provided for looked after children, those known to be entitled to free school meals and pupils with a parent in the armed forces, is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the attainment of the most able students, in English and science, by ensuring that all teachers set challenging activities for these students that really make them think and enable them to understand concepts at a higher level.
- Encourage students to make written responses to teachers' marking, so that they fully engage in a learning dialogue which helps them to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When students join the school in Year 7 their standards are generally slightly below their peers nationally. The school quickly develops their skills in reading, writing and mathematics to enable them to learn well in other subjects. Students are placed in groups for extra help, which help to secure their good progress across a range of subjects and years.
- The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has been rising continuously since the previous inspection. In 2012 this figure was 66% and was significantly above the national level, and in 2013 it was slightly higher at 67%. In mathematics, above average proportions of students attain A or A* grades at GCSE; however, this is not the case for the other core subjects and both English and science are lagging behind.
- Students achieve well in the sixth form. Inspectors observed students acquiring knowledge and deepening their understanding quickly across a range of subjects. This is reflected in the school's best ever A-level results in 2013, with more Years 12 and 13 students gaining higher grades and going on to attend university than in the school's history.
- Good teaching throughout the school has meant that students' achievements in English and mathematics have improved at all levels across the school. All groups of students make good progress, including those from minority ethnic groups.
- The school has entered students early for mathematics and English GCSE examinations; this has had a positive impact on results in these subjects and more students are achieving higher grades in mathematics as a result.
- The school makes good use of pupil premium funding through clubs to boost aspirations, such as the 'brilliant club', peer reading and mentoring. As a result, students known to be eligible for free school meals achieve ahead of similar pupils nationally and are closing gaps in achievement within the school. At the end of last year these students were slightly less than a grade behind their peers in English and two thirds of a grade behind in mathematics. Current school information shows that the progress of these pupils is similar to other students.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve in line with other students and some make exceptional progress, because the school creates a unique package of support for each individual student tailored to their particular needs.
- Students who speak English as an additional language receive excellent support. Specialist staff help students to catch up quickly and make excellent progress, achieving standards ahead of their peers nationally, significantly so in mathematics.
- Additional funding to boost the learning for students coming into Year 7 who need extra literacy and numeracy support is very well used. Summer holiday school for two weeks before the start of term and continued support in the 'explorer' group, where they are taught by primary specialist teachers, help to boost their learning. This has contributed to their rapid progress when joining the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- School leaders have rightly placed a strong focus on teaching and learning and this is one of the main reasons why the quality of teaching has been consolidated and improved further. The best practice in teaching is shared amongst staff, who are reflective and readily engage in constructive feedback and training focused around teaching. Mutual respect is at the heart of the positive relationships which pervade the school.
- In an outstanding music lesson, Year 7 students made rapid progress in developing their skills to play different instruments and perform as a group. The teacher's outstanding planning included the using the 'music bank', an online resource, enabling students of all abilities to achieve exceptionally well with maximum levels of enjoyment.

- The teaching of mathematics focuses heavily on promoting students' understanding of mathematical concepts, by providing ready examples of how they apply to real problems in the wider world. Students regularly take the lead and 'teach' others in the class, showing that they know how to apply their knowledge.
- Almost all of the teachers set high expectations and the pace of lessons is typically swift, with a good variety of challenging activities and opportunities for students to be involved throughout. Although most teachers plan lessons which ensure that all groups and abilities are provided for, in science and in English, the most-able students are not being consistently challenged and too frequently complete tasks pitched at the same level for the majority within the class.
- Teachers regularly check students' understanding during lessons and provide support where needed. They refer to prior learning and use homework, which is posted on the school intranet, to extend students' thinking beyond the lesson. The homework club, run from the library daily, is a popular and well used resource.
- Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to students' good learning and progress. They know their students well and are sensitive to their needs, providing the right balance of support at the right time. As a result, they help to ensure that all students make the best progress that they can.
- Teachers are more adept in linking activities with students' targets so that they understand what is expected of them and how they can achieve greater success. There are some good examples of written marking, for example in English; however, students are not always reminded or encouraged to make their own written response to comments, showing that they truly understand how to make further improvements.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is consistently strong and this has contributed to the rise in standards of the post-16 students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning. They manage their own behaviour very well and play an active part in maintaining the positive, friendly atmosphere in the school.
- The school manages behaviour well and staff are consistent in their use of the school 'relationship' policy. Students appreciate this and say that behaviour has improved over recent years.
- The large number of parents who responded to Parent View during the inspection, and those who expressed their views through letters and emails, agree that behaviour in lessons and around school has greatly improved. The school's own parental surveys show the high level of praise which parents express for the way in which the school has successfully created a truly harmonious, safe community. Staff make doubly sure that students move around the site without incident and the students themselves say that they feel very safe in school.
- Without exception, students express great pride in their school community and many volunteer to train as mentors, or peer tutors to support the younger students. Junior prefects in Year 9 willingly provide one-to-one reading support for Year 7 students. Students treat each other with mutual respect and are tolerant of each other's differences. There are few racist incidents and discrimination is not tolerated.
- Bullying is rare and dealt with effectively when it occurs. Students understand risk and know about different types of bullying and how to keep themselves safe, especially on the internet. This is because the school raises their awareness through assemblies and teaching in different subjects.
- In the very small proportion of lessons where teaching is less engaging, students occasionally lose their focus and become restless, but generally respond to teachers' reminders about their behaviour.
- Attendance is above average and has improved since the last inspection, and exclusions have reduced. The school has been active in promoting attendance and continues to tackle persistent absence through its close working partnerships with families who struggle in this area.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- School leaders have been highly successful in continuing to improve the school. Consistently raising the quality of teaching has been at the heart of their vision to drive up standards across the school and sixth form. They give clear direction and their high expectations are reflected throughout the school.
- The leadership and management of teaching and learning are outstanding and ensure that the very best teaching practices are shared amongst staff and there is a whole-school focus on helping teachers to closely match lesson activities to the different groups of students in the school. School leaders have worked closely with their improvement adviser and local authority to develop accurate quality assurance systems and regularly check that improvement is taking place across the main school and in the sixth form.
- The school reviews all aspects of its work thoroughly and acts quickly to address any gaps so that the pace of improvements is not slowed. School development plans are realistic and sharply focused. Plans to raise standards are linked to close checks on the quality of teaching, learning and progress, and these are shared by all leaders at all levels in the school. Excellent staff training and the highly effective development of talented teaching staff and subject leaders in recent years have led to marked improvements across the school.
- Leaders make sure that teachers' pay and performance link directly to whole-school priorities and students' progress. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching so that more is now good and outstanding.
- Equal opportunities are rigorously promoted and the school makes sure that every student has an equal chance of success. No student is denied access to anything the school has to offer. Pupil premium funding has been especially well used to promote literacy across the school, particularly through the work of the school's award winning librarian and her exciting range of reading challenges, which the students competitively take up.
- The range of subjects, courses and extra-curricular activities meets the needs of students very well. In addition, the varied assemblies promoting common values, added to the music and dance performances, complement the strong, inclusive dimension of the school. Few opportunities are missed to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is a key strength of the school.
- Leaders liaise closely with other providers to make sure that the students are attending and performing well in their studies away from the main school site.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and aspects for further development. Governors are highly skilled and their work with school leaders has been essential in the drive to securing improvements in the school. They have an excellent understanding of information on students' progress, and use the very latest available to make comparisons with other schools. Governors are committed to raising the quality of teaching and know where the very best teaching and learning exist in the school and the structures in place for improving teaching. They make regular visits to check directly on key areas of the school's work and regularly meet with staff who present up-to-the-minute progress reports. Financial resources are efficiently managed, including pupil premium funding and how this impacts on students' achievement. Governors check that targets to improve staff performance are reviewed carefully and that teachers' pay is linked to how well students are achieving. They ensure that safeguarding consistently meets requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	100745
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	427350

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	1,400
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Jamieson
Headteacher	Stephen Brady
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 June 2011
Telephone number	020 86999343
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