

# Forest Hill School

Dacres Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 2XN

## Inspection dates

6–7 December 2017

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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Although there are signs of improvement, pupils' achievements have been low for several years, including those of disadvantaged pupils.
- Important weaknesses remain in teaching and learning. Teaching quality varies within and across subjects. As a result, teaching does not have a consistently strong enough impact on pupils' achievement.
- Recent difficulties have slowed the rate of improvement. Significant developments in the way the school is led and managed have not yet had sufficient impact on raising standards.
- Behaviour requires improvement because too many pupils lack the motivation and drive to succeed consistently well across all subjects.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school has robust procedures to promote pupils' personal development and welfare. Pupils are cared for well. They are helped to overcome social and personal challenges.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, have taken bold decisions to improve the school's organisation and routines. As a result, the school is well placed to move forward.
- Good provision in the sixth form is the result of strong leadership and effective teaching. Students are supported well so that they are able to make the most of the opportunities available.
- Some teaching is effective, including for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Where this is the case, pupils make good progress.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that they are consistently good by ensuring that:
  - teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are appropriately high
  - all pupils, including the most and least able, are given work that challenges their thinking and deepens their learning
  - pupils take pride in their work so that the quality of presentation in pupils' books is of a high standard.
- Improve pupils' behaviour further by ensuring that:
  - pupils are interested by the work they are given so that they are motivated to reach their full potential
  - the good systems and procedures for managing behaviour are applied consistently across all subjects and by all teachers.
- Improve pupils' achievements by ensuring that:
  - the progress of all pupils, including the most able, is boosted
  - the achievement difference between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally is reduced further
  - inconsistencies in teaching quality are eliminated so that progress is consistently good.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Important improvements to the way the school is led and managed have not yet had sufficient impact on raising standards. As a result, the impact of leadership and management on raising standards requires improvement.
- Senior leaders and governors have moved decisively to tackle the school's weaknesses. This has involved taking some difficult decisions, including reducing staff numbers, managing the curriculum and revising the school day. With the support of the local authority, much has been achieved. The school is now on a secure financial footing. There is a greater focus on teaching quality and pupils' achievement, and systems and procedures, such as those for safeguarding, are firmly in place. However, the staffing issues and loss of teaching time that occurred during the spring and summer terms of 2017 delayed the impact of these developments. As a result, the changes have not had as much impact as leaders intended.
- Despite setbacks, the school is now moving forward steadily and the groundwork for further improvement has been established. For example, the revised arrangements for senior and middle leadership, introduced in September, are enabling leaders at all levels to take greater responsibility for teaching quality and pupils' progress. In addition, arrangements for areas such as safeguarding, the management of teachers' performance, and checking on pupils' progress and attendance have been made more effective.
- While these developments have not yet resulted in a rapid and sustained rise in standards, and inconsistencies remain, there have been some notable successes. Pupils' attendance has improved considerably so that fewer days are lost to absence. There are early signs that pupils' progress is improving, especially in Years 10 and 11. Furthermore, more rigorous arrangements to monitor teaching standards and tackle underperformance are resulting in better teaching.
- Leaders and governors recognise that they are on an upward journey and that they need to consolidate improvements. Their analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses is sharp and honest. They have not shied away from tackling difficult issues and rightly judge that the school is not yet good. Leaders collect information about the school's performance from a variety of sources, such as classroom observation, assessments about pupils' work, behaviour and attendance. As a result, they have an accurate understanding of the school's most pressing priorities.
- The procedures to check pupils' progress are increasingly robust, including the small number who attend alternative provision. This means that the school's leaders identify those pupils who are falling behind with learning effectively and provide support to help them catch up. Interventions by teachers and additional support contribute effectively to the upward trend in pupils' achievement.
- The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. Despite the need to reduce staff, leaders and governors have been resolute in maintaining the breadth of the curriculum. This ensures that pupils have a wide range of subjects that prepare them well for their future. For example, all boys study dance, drama, art, and design and technology as part of the programme in Years 7, 8 and 9. Similarly, all pupils study personal, social,

health and economic (PSHE) education and religious education at key stage 4. There is a broad range of subjects to choose from at both GCSE and A level.

- Leaders have also focused on improving pupils' competence in literacy and numeracy. For example, teachers emphasise the development of pupils' reading skills, often by getting them to read out loud in classrooms. This has resulted in a clear improvement in pupils' literacy skills and their enjoyment of reading. The use of numeracy is evident in subjects such as science and design and technology. In mathematics, the use of scientific formulas to help pupils understand how to apply numeracy more widely is especially effective.
- The school provides a wide range of after-school activities, trips and visits that extend pupils' experiences and support learning. For example, extended trips to Sicily and Iceland for geography and to Berlin for history help pupils broaden their understanding of the world. There are after-school sessions for dance, sports and Latin, and a range of music clubs, including for guitar, creative ensemble, jazz collective and the FHS Orchestra.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The PSHE education programme contributes much to pupils' development and is typically well taught. Pupils develop their understanding of drug misuse, sexual and emotional health, and relationships well. They discuss sensitive issues with maturity and growing awareness of themselves. This helps to raise their self-confidence. Careers education ensures that pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils have an appropriate understanding of British values, including the rule of law, mutual respect for others and tolerance for those with different faiths or none. The development of their personal skills is supported well by the school's 'student congress', through which pupils contribute to the life of the school. For example, pupils were consulted on changes to the timings of the school day and are routinely involved in helping governors appoint new staff.
- Special educational needs provision is well led and managed. The use of funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is effective. There are secure procedures for identifying those pupils who need extra help with their learning. The arrangements for teaching pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is especially effective. This is because pupils develop their self-confidence in small groups.
- The use of funds to support disadvantaged pupils, and those in Year 7 who need to catch up with their peers, is increasingly effective. This is the result of improved systems to identify those pupils who need additional support. However, differences remain. Leaders know that there is much to do to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve at similar levels to pupils nationally, but have made a solid start to reducing the disparities between different groups.
- The school has received strong support from the local authority, including for its financial difficulties and the resulting reorganisation of staff responsibilities. This support has contributed clearly to the school's improvements.

## Governance of the school

- Governors are increasingly effective. The reorganisation of the governing body to create a more effective committee structure, and a recent review, have helped to improve the quality of governance. For example, decisions are now taken at full governing body meetings rather than at committee level, ensuring that all governors are involved in supporting the school's improvement priorities.
- Governors have carried out a skills audit, which they have used to help them recruit new members with appropriate and complementary expertise. As a result, the capability of the governing body to help steer the school's culture and continued progress is considerably enhanced. For example, governors were involved fully in the school's financial recovery plan and in drawing up the plans for improvement.
- The range and accuracy of the information provided to governors have improved considerably. As a result, governors analyse the school's strengths and weaknesses accurately. They have a clear understanding of the school's priorities. They provide well-targeted support to leaders and hold them to account for the school's performance in equal measure.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors have improved procedures for safeguarding effectively so that they are robust in promoting pupils' welfare and safety. For example, the school's written records are well maintained. Staff work closely with external agencies, such as the local authority and local charities, to support the most vulnerable pupils. An evaluation of the school's safeguarding procedures by the local authority judged the school's arrangements to be effective.
- The procedures for vetting staff are secure. The single central register meets current requirements and provides up-to-date information about the checks the school has made to ensure the suitability of staff. Senior leaders and governors have received training in safer recruitment, ensuring that safeguarding is a central part of the school's culture.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and support staff have a secure knowledge of child protection and understand whom to contact if they have a concern about a pupil. They have received appropriate training about child protection. All have signed to say that they have received and read the latest relevant sections of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. Policies are detailed and comprehensive, and include clear guidance on aspects of safeguarding, such as recognising the signs of abuse, and the 'Prevent' duty. This ensures that staff are suitably vigilant.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet good. This is because the quality of teaching is inconsistent across and between subjects. As a result, not enough pupils make good progress.
- Expectations about pupils' achievements are not as consistently high as they should be.

Too often, pupils are given work that does not challenge them enough. The most able pupils are not consistently stretched to achieve at the higher levels. For example, those pupils who finish a task quickly are not provided with additional and more challenging work quickly enough.

- When lower attaining pupils are not given additional support or resources to help them tackle the work successfully, they become over-dependent on their teacher and have to ask for help. This slows their learning.
- There are some inconsistencies in the clarity of teachers' instructions. Where this is the case, teachers are unclear about what they want pupils to do or expect them to achieve. As a result, pupils are unsure about the task and at what standard they are aiming for and some pupils do not reach high enough standards or consolidate their learning sufficiently. In other instances, learning lacks interest and excitement and pupils lose motivation. This slows progress, because pupils are not inspired to learn.
- Work in pupils' books is not consistently of a high enough standard. In too many cases, the books are scruffy and poorly presented and pupils take too little pride in their work. This limits pupils' achievement because they are not able to use previous learning to deepen their understanding or refer to their books when revising for examinations.
- Despite inconsistencies, there have been some improvements to teaching. The school's checks on teaching quality show a rise in the proportion of teaching that is effective, and assessment information shows some improvement in outcomes. However, leaders recognise that there is much to do to consolidate these improvements.
- Stronger teaching is characterised by the effective use of questions to stretch pupils' thinking and deepen their knowledge. For example, in English, pupils were inspired to develop their understanding of different types of literature. In modern foreign languages, drama and dance, teaching motivated pupils to work hard and do well. Good examples were seen across subjects where teachers were quick to help those pupils who were struggling by providing timely support. Where teaching is effective, pupils are engaged in their work and, consequently, achieve well.
- The teaching of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is effective. Small-group work for subjects such as science, history and geography enables teachers to provide well-targeted support and to monitor progress closely. This approach is helping to build these pupils' self-confidence and, as a result, pupils are making good progress from their starting points.
- Literacy and numeracy teaching is mostly effective. The school's focus on literacy has improved pupils' reading skills well. Pupils enjoy reading and can read fluently. Their reading skills are promoted well by providing opportunities for pupils to read out loud in classrooms. Numeracy skills are used in a variety of subjects. Teachers often make clear links between mathematics and science, for example.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school provides well-thought-out opportunities for pupils to develop their

understanding of themselves and the world in which they live. For example, work in PSHE education provides pupils with the knowledge they need to take responsibility for their own actions, including in relation to drugs and sexual and emotional health. 'Subject ambassadors' enable pupils to share their interests more widely with others and promote an enjoyment of learning.

- The great majority of pupils have positive attitudes to school and are keen to learn. In Year 11, for example, pupils are highly focused on their examinations and how to do their best. Pupils are usually respectful of their teachers and of each other. They work together to share ideas and help each other.
- The school has effective arrangements for supporting pupils who are experiencing difficulties or whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The school provides a full-time counselling service that pupils can use in a variety of ways, including self-referral. More than 100 pupils used the service last year. Parents are also encouraged to make use of the service. In addition, the school works closely with the local authority and external agencies to provide support for vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, whether from online bullying or on the streets around school, for example. The PSHE education programme provides a suitable range of topics that contribute well to pupils' personal development and welfare. For example, anti-bullying, drug misuse and knife crime are covered in detail.
- The school promotes equality effectively. Pupils have a clear understanding of what constitutes discrimination, including homophobia and discrimination by race and gender. This contributes to the positive relationships between pupils of different backgrounds and with their teachers.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although leaders have done much to improve behaviour, some inconsistencies remain. In classrooms, instances of low-level disruption sometimes get in the way of pupils' learning. In most cases, disruption is limited to just a few boys and does not affect the whole class. However, it slows the learning of those involved. Pupils say that a few pupils 'repeat their behaviour' and that the time spent by teachers dealing with it interrupts the flow of the lesson.
- In most cases, behaviour in classrooms is linked closely to the quality of teaching. Where teaching is weaker, teachers do not apply the school's behaviour code effectively and fail to motivate pupils so that they want to achieve. In these circumstances, pupils lose concentration or are not engaged fully in the learning. However, where teaching is effective, it promotes pupils' positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour.
- Pupils' attendance has improved over the past year and is now at least average. This is the result of the work of pastoral staff, who have introduced rigorous procedures for following up absences. There is clear emphasis on making sure that pupils attend regularly and that timely action is taken to tackle non-attendance.
- Pupils say that bullying and derogatory behaviour are rare. They are clear that if either happens, staff deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils feel safe in school and especially like the separate area in the playground for Year 7 pupils.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is typically higher than in other schools in England. However, outcomes by the end of Year 11 have been low over the past few years, reflecting pupils' poor progress. Pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations in 2016 and 2017 was below average. Although there have been recent improvements in pupils' progress, this is not the case for all groups.
- The school's assessment information shows that current pupils' progress is improving, especially in Years 10 and 11. Standards in English and mathematics are beginning to rise. The school's analysis suggests that pupils will make average progress by the end of the academic year. However, leaders recognise that to reach these predictions, teaching needs to be improved further and inconsistencies in teaching quality reduced.
- Pupils do well in some subjects, for example, drama, dance and finance. In English and mathematics, more time for learning is having a positive impact on pupils' achievements in Years 10 and 11. In particular, pupils are enthusiastic and willing readers and many enjoy reading for pleasure. This is supported well by weekly literacy sessions.
- Disadvantaged pupils are starting to make better progress than previously. The differences between the achievements of disadvantaged pupils and those of all pupils nationally are diminishing. This is because of the way the school carefully monitors pupils' progress and identifies those pupils falling behind in their work, so that support can be provided to help them catch up.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are also beginning to make stronger progress as a result of more challenging teaching. However, here too, inconsistency of provision and outcomes remains.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make more rapid progress from their starting points than previously. The school calculates that around two thirds of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make the expected progress from their starting points. This is an improvement on recent years and the result of the support they receive in the 'explorer' classes.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make noticeable progress in developing their written and oral skills. This is because of the school's focus on literacy and the additional support provided for these pupils.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

## Good

- The leadership of the sixth form, which is run jointly with Sydenham School, is effective. Leaders have high expectations of themselves, staff and students. They work successfully to give students a rounded educational experience that prepares them well for the next stage of their lives.
- Leaders have established rigorous entry requirements so that students are properly matched to the courses they study. This is helped further by the wide range of subjects on offer and the quality of support for students. For example, arrangements for careers information, advice and guidance are strong and individual tutorials help students to



make the right choices.

- Leaders have been quick to tackle weaknesses and have focused successfully on any subjects where analysis shows that students underachieved. The strategies they have used include the use of experienced teachers to support those who are less experienced and effective mentoring of students. As a result, courses such as GCSE mathematics are seeing a distinct improvement. Procedures to assess students' achievements and check their progress are secure. This ensures that where students are struggling, they are provided with appropriate support.
- The quality of teaching is good. Students are challenged effectively and given work that interests and motivates them. Teachers' secure subject knowledge and tasks that stretch students' learning contribute well to their progress. Where teachers' knowledge of their subjects is strong, it enables them to ask questions that deepen students' understanding effectively.
- Students, including disadvantaged students, make increasingly good progress. The results of the mock examinations, taken very recently by current students, show a positive picture of achievement, with a high proportion achieving the top grades. Progression to education, employment or training is strong, as is the proportion going to top universities.

## School details

Unique reference number	100745
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10041419

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 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,379
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Perry
Headteacher	Mike Sullivan
Telephone number	0208 699 9343
Website	<a href="http://www.foresthillschool.co.uk">www.foresthillschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@foresthillschool.co.uk">info@foresthillschool.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	12 November 2013

## Information about this school

- Forest Hill School is larger than the average-sized school for pupils aged 11 to 18. The sixth form is run jointly in a partnership between Forest Hill School and Sydenham School.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive special educational needs support is well above

average. The proportion with a statement of special educational need or an education, health and care plan is above average.

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision on other sites recommended by the local authority.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in each year group except for Year 10, where pupils were on work experience. All of these observations were carried out jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work across the range of subjects.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from Years 7 and 8 reading.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break- and lunchtime.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, governors, subject leaders and pupils.
- A range of documentation and policies was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, assessment information, external reviews and the minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors scrutinised records relating to the quality of teaching and the school's website, including information about extra-curricular activities.
- Records, policies and procedures relating to safeguarding were reviewed.
- Inspectors took account of 159 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. They also considered responses from seven members of staff.

## Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Laurence King	Ofsted Inspector
Gerard Strong	Ofsted Inspector
Pat Slonecki	Ofsted Inspector
Beverley Johnston	Ofsted Inspector

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