

Inspection of Forest Hill School

Dacres Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 2XN

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school and are happy coming to Forest Hill. They feel safe and get along well with staff. Teachers work hard to promote an inclusive culture, and they support all students to settle in. The school's work in promoting pupils' personal development is a strength, including understanding of equalities issues. Clubs and extra-curricular activities are restarting after the COVID-19 lockdowns, and include opportunities in music, dance and sport.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour, although this is not always managed consistently across the school. In a minority of lessons, low-level disruption affects pupils' learning. Pupils said that bullying occurs, but that staff are usually quick to act when they are made aware of it.

Leaders and governors are ambitious for pupils to succeed, but the quality of education remains inconsistent. Some subjects are taught and planned well, but not all curriculum areas help pupils make the progress they should. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not supported as effectively as they could be. Sixth-form students are enthusiastic learners. Their progress is good, and leaders are ambitious for their future destinations.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are aware that the quality of education across individual subjects is inconsistent. Curriculum planning in English, history and geography is more advanced than in other subjects. In English, pupils have regular opportunities to encounter a wide range of books, and they are becoming increasingly more confident in reading. Weaker readers receive extra support to help them catch up with both reading and writing. Some English teaching promotes the development of ambitious ideas and vocabulary. For example, in a Year 10 class, pupils analysed texts through a lens of Marxism, Feminism and Freudian theory, as well as thinking about the unconscious mind.

Not all subjects are as well planned, implemented or assessed. Teaching in mathematics is driven by the GCSE examination requirements, rather than deeply embedding mathematical knowledge. While pupils generally enjoy participating in physical education (PE), the core programme is not sufficiently structured and, again, teaching and assessment are focused on what pupils need to do in order to gain examination marks. In science, while the curriculum is well-planned, teaching often lacks ambition and does not secure good-quality work. In design and technology, sequencing of knowledge and skills does not always reflect the national curriculum expectations. Although pupils study three languages during Years 7 to 9, leaders do not prioritise languages at key stage 4. Consequently, the proportion continuing to study a modern foreign language at GCSE is very low, and this is a key reason why uptake of the English Baccalaureate is low.

Pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum and are able to enjoy the same additional extra-curricular activities as their peers. However, pupils identified as needing SEND support are not given enough attention in the classroom, and teaching is not always adapted sufficiently to meet pupils' needs across the curriculum.

The quality of education is better in the sixth form and is a strength of the school. A-level students achieve well, and courses are well matched to their interests and aspirations. New vocational courses have been introduced which provide more challenge than those offered previously.

In class, pupils behave well where teacher expectations are high. However, this is not always the case. Low-level disruption impacts negatively on learning when teachers do not always maintain high expectations of behaviour and attitudes to learning. Similarly, a small number of pupils show boisterous behaviours in the corridors, and teachers do not deal with this consistently using the behaviour policy.

A range of extra-curricular programmes has recently relaunched, including opportunities in sport and music. Pupils benefit from a strong curriculum for their personal, social, health and economic education lessons and are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Pupils at the school recently received an award for their work to promote awareness of LGBTQ+ equalities.

Governors are knowledgeable. They provide challenge and support to school leaders, but the impact of their work has been variable. They have recently recruited new governors to strengthen the governing body. Nonetheless, governors recognise that more improvement is required, for example in provision for pupils with SEND and in the quality of education more generally.

Leaders promote staff well-being and regularly seek their views, as well as the views of parents. Staff feel listened to and supported to implement the vision of governors and leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide staff with regular and up-to-date safeguarding training. As a result, staff are confident about what actions to take when they have any safeguarding concerns. Leaders identify and help vulnerable pupils in a timely and appropriate manner, including through readily seeking and acting on expert advice.

Staff work well with external agencies and professionals to support and keep pupils safe. Pupils learn about risks both online and outside the school environment. Leaders track and deal appropriately with any incidents of inappropriate peer-on-peer behaviour.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The quality of education is inconsistent. Some subjects, such as mathematics, PE, and design and technology, are not planned well enough or are heavily focused on examination technique. In science, teaching is not sufficiently ambitious. Senior leaders should make sure that all subjects are consistently well planned and taught so that pupils' learning across the curriculum is deep and secure.
- Although pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum as others, they are not supported well enough in class, and teaching is not sufficiently adapted to help them learn well. Leaders and governors should ensure that support for these pupils is strengthened across the curriculum.
- Despite recent changes to the school's behaviour policy and a reduction in recorded incidents of misbehaviour, teachers' expectations in the classroom remain inconsistent. This leads to low-level disruption, which, in turn, is sometimes unchallenged and disrupts learning in lessons. Leaders should ensure that the school's behaviour policy is applied consistently by all staff, both in lessons and around the school.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	100745
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10200570
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1255
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Keith Knox
Headteacher	Michael Sullivan
Website	www.foresthillschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 December 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in April 2016, and, since the last inspection, there has been significant staff turnover at the school.
- Forest Hill School is larger than the average-sized school for pupils aged 11 to 18, with a sixth form which is jointly run as a consortium with Sydenham School.
- The published admission number for Year 7 has been reduced from 220 to 180 pupils.
- A small number of pupils attend off-site alternative provision, recommended by the local authority.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, senior leaders, subject leaders, and many teachers. Inspectors also held meetings with support staff and the leader responsible for pupils with SEND.
- A meeting was held with the chair of the governing body and four other governors. Inspectors also talked with the school's improvement partner and a representative from the local authority by telephone.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, PE, history, and business studies. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding, including the record of recruitment checks carried out on adults working at the school. Inspectors reviewed the school's single central record and held discussions with the designated safeguarding lead. The inspection team also reviewed school policies and documentary evidence about safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils to discuss their views. Inspectors also talked to pupils informally about the school.
- Inspectors took account of to the Ofsted Parent View survey, along with the views of members of staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jeffery Quaye, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Southworth	Ofsted Inspector
Rosemarie Kennedy	Ofsted Inspector
Nigel Clemens	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Maguire	Ofsted Inspector

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