



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**FOREST SCHOOL**

**INTERIM INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Forest School

The preparatory school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of School/College	<b>Forest School</b>
DfE Number	<b>320/6000</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>312677</b>
Address	<b>Forest School College Place Snaresbrook London E17 3PY</b>
Telephone Number	<b>020 8509 6560</b>
Fax Number	<b>020 8520 3656</b>
Email Address	<b>warden@forest.org.uk</b>
The Warden	<b>Mrs Sarah Kerr-Dineen</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr John Matthews</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>1020</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (507 boys; 513 girls)</b>
Numbers by age	11-18 <b>1020</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>1020</b>
Inspection dates	<b>29 Nov 2011 to 30 Nov 2011</b>

## PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule* for INTERIM inspections. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in October 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010\*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- Quality of education provided (teaching)
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- Premises and accommodation
- Provision of information
- Manner in which complaints are to be handled

\*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 Forest School is an independent day school for girls and boys aged from 4 to 18, comprising on one site a preparatory school, boys' school and girls' school. A separate report has been published for the preparatory school. Pupils in the boys' school and the girls' school are taught in single-sex classes up to GCSE; teaching in the sixth form is co-educational. Pupils come together throughout for many co-curricular activities and social time. The school was founded in 1834 as an Anglican foundation. The whole school, with its own grounds and sports facilities, is located on the edge of Epping Forest in north east London. The school is governed by the Governing Council. Since the previous inspection a Director of Teaching and Learning, and a Director of Co-curriculum have been appointed. The school has been reconfigured to improve the teaching accommodation.
- 1.2 The school aims to promote the pupils' academic achievement, their all-round personal development, their enjoyment of school, their involvement in school life and their respect for other pupils. The school values its combined single-sex and co-educational structure, its all-encompassing pastoral system and the benefits of the multi-cultural profile of its pupils.
- 1.3 There are 1020 pupils in the senior school of whom 269 are in the sixth form. The number of girls and boys in the school is almost equal. Most pupils progress from the preparatory school into the senior schools at the age of 11, with an additional intake, mainly from local maintained schools. Almost all pupils continue into the sixth form and they are joined by a small number, in the main from local maintained schools. The majority of pupils are of above average ability and a proportion have ability that is far above the national average. The school has identified 69 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Forty-three pupils receive learning support from the school. No pupil has English as an additional language (EAL) and no pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.4 Pupils come primarily from professional and business backgrounds. Pupils travel from approximately a twelve mile radius. About a third of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

### **The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills**

- 2.1 The overall achievement of the pupils is excellent. The standards achieved by pupils of all abilities are high. They are purposeful, determined and conscientious, individually, and in groups. They are orally fluent, writing with precision in factual tasks, and creatively and fluently in imaginative work. They apply their mathematical skills well and conduct scientific experiments with confidence and competence. Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) skills with increasing confidence. They achieve highly in physical activities. Outstanding achievements are seen in many co-curricular pursuits, especially sport, music and drama. Speech and drama examination results are high. Many pupils enjoy individual and team success in inter-school sporting fixtures and a number of pupils have been successful in national sports competitions. Some of pupils have reached international levels in physics and informatics Olympiads.
- 2.2 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent three years for which comparable statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE and A level for both girls and boys have been far above the national average for pupils in maintained schools and above the national average for pupils in maintained selective schools. Girls and boys achieve broadly similar results. Results at GCSE over the last three years have been consistent, with almost all pupils achieving grades A\*-C and almost three-quarters of pupils gaining grades A\* or A. Results at A level over the last three years have shown a firm upward trend. Almost all pupils achieved grades A\* to E and well over three-quarters achieved grades A\* to B. Results at A level and GCSE in 2011 showed a further improvement on previous years. These results, together with inspection evidence, show that pupils make good progress in relation to their above average abilities. Pupils with SEND are supported effectively, enabling them to achieve as well as their peers in relation to their abilities. Good provision is made to challenge the most able, gifted and talented pupils, who also progress well. Almost all pupils proceed to higher education, some after a gap year.
- 2.3 The pupils work with enjoyment and commitment and are keen to express their opinions. They are focused in lessons and prize success highly. The volume of their work is considerable and the quality overall is high, which reflects the significant progress pupils make over time.
- 2.4 The curriculum is well-conceived and balanced. It makes an excellent contribution to the pupils' achievement and progress. It is stimulating and challenging and includes a wide range of subjects covering the required areas of learning. The curriculum offers the separate sciences and three modern foreign languages. Creative and expressive subjects are well represented. Latin is taught from Year 7, and from Year 9 the options programme is wide and includes Ancient Greek. The curriculum offers pupils the opportunity to pursue their own research through the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) with diverse chosen subjects including 'the equality of women in the workplace' and 'the history of the Boeing 747'. The use of ICT has increased since the previous inspection. The programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE), which includes citizenship, is taught effectively in dedicated lessons. Older pupils receive helpful careers' advice but this does not extend to younger pupils to help them make option subject choices.

- 2.5 Co-curricular achievement is outstanding. An extensive range of activities, which now ensures parity of opportunity between girls and boys, is provided before school, during lunchtimes and after school. The co-curricular opportunities support and inspire the pupils' academic, musical, creative and sporting interests most effectively, giving them the chance to continue to develop their all-round skills and talents. Pupils value these opportunities highly. Music, drama and the Combined Cadet Corps (CCF) are particularly popular and well supported. A significant number of pupils take part successfully in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Indoor and outdoor facilities for sport are excellent and contribute positively to the learning experience and environment.
- 2.6 Teaching is excellent overall. Highly stimulating and engaging teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge, increase their understanding and make rapid progress. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, facilitate discussion and use effective questioning techniques. Lessons are well planned, structured with clear objectives. However, in a very small number of lessons, progress could be better because opportunities are not taken to allow pupils to develop their own ideas and improve their subject skills. Pupils show respect for their teachers, listen attentively and learn from each other's views. The use of data for tracking pupil progress is an area currently being developed by the schools. All work is regularly reviewed by the teachers. In several subjects, marking is excellent and include comments which point the way forward. However, in others, marking is insufficiently detailed and lacks suggestions for further improvement. Pupils from a young age value the well-resourced library which successfully promotes independent learning.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 2.7 The quality of the pupils' personal and social development is excellent and, as at the time of the previous inspection, is a real strength of the school. The strong Christian ethos allows pupils to grow into self-assured, self-confident young people. All pupils are encouraged to develop their own characters and personalities and to respect and understand the values and beliefs of others. Their moral awareness is high. Pupils show a clear understanding of the positive values of good conduct. In discussions with pupils it was evident that they had a firm sense of right and wrong. They value the commendations awarded for outstanding achievement, effort and success and have a clear understanding of the school's sanctions.
- 2.8 Pupils are very friendly and they enjoy excellent relations with one another and with their teachers. They show high levels of spiritual development in assemblies, in discussions in lessons and, also, for example, through art displays and musical performance. Pupils benefit from the extensive leadership opportunities, especially through the mentor, monitor, prefect and house systems. They show initiative and are keen to contribute to the community, both within and outside school. They are tolerant, and those of other faiths are made to feel welcome. Pupils develop a very good understanding of their own and other cultures within their multi-cultural community, through lessons, assemblies, and through visits and overseas trips. Much charity work is undertaken throughout the year, some of which has an international dimension. The pupils' self-development is enhanced by the extensive range of school facilities and the beauty of the surroundings.
- 2.9 Pastoral arrangements are excellent and valued highly by pupils and parents. These continue to be a strength of the school. Pupils are extremely well looked after within a highly supportive, all-encompassing pastoral system, in a well-ordered environment. The house system offers pupils excellent opportunities to mix with

pupils in different year groups, fostering a sense of belonging and community. Pupils feel settled, happy and secure. They find staff caring, approachable and ready to help them. Teachers know the pupils very well. Pupils with concerns are encouraged to talk to the person with whom they feel comfortable; their mentor, their form tutor or senior pastoral staff. The pupils' pre-inspection questionnaire responses showed clearly that they liked being in the school, felt that teachers helped them learn, that they are encouraged to work independently and that they made good progress. A minority raised concerns that the teachers did not always listen to their views or treat them equally and did not fully monitor their work load. A small minority expressed the view that teachers were not always fair in their distribution of rewards and punishments. However, inspection evidence confirmed that these views were not justified. In interviews, pupils expressed the opinion that their views are heard. They spoke of their appreciation of the fairness of their treatment and of the extra help and support given by staff, both academic and pastoral.

- 2.10 The safety and welfare of the pupils are given the highest priority. Clear policies and effective procedures safeguard and promote the pupils' welfare. Good behaviour is strongly promoted through expectation and by example. Anti-bullying policies are comprehensive, regularly reviewed and understood by staff and pupils. Incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly by staff. Necessary staff training in child protection takes place regularly. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are highly effective. Risk assessments are adhered to and regularly reviewed. All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken, and staff and pupils are familiar with fire prevention procedures. School fire drills are carried out regularly and the electrical safety of appliances is also checked regularly. The school medical centre is well-staffed and suitably equipped. The school has an appropriate three year plan for improving access for pupils with disabilities. The admissions register is kept properly. The registration system is efficient and absences are followed up swiftly. The school is careful to ensure that all the required checks over the suitability of adults to work with children are undertaken.

### **The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management**

- 2.11 The School Council has an excellent insight into how the school operates. Governors offer a breadth of experience and expertise which contribute positively to the efficient running of the school and its future planning. The governors are aware of their regulatory responsibilities for child protection, welfare, health and safety. Child protection arrangements are reviewed annually. Governors are recruited with particular areas of expertise to meet the school's needs. They are prudent financial managers and successfully maintain the high quality of buildings, resources and staffing. Considerable attention has been given to extending and upgrading facilities. Communication between the governors and senior staff is regular, both formal and informal. Relations between governors and senior staff are excellent and built on mutual trust. Governors have a realistic awareness of the challenges that their role places on them. However, at present, the governors' view of the success of the school is based on informal monitoring systems. This has been recognised, and systems are being set up for governors to monitor the work of the school more formally, for example through the work of the recently-established academic committee. A strategic, long term development plan, to which all staff contribute, is in place and which clearly indicates the school's future direction.



- 2.12 The school benefits from outstanding leadership and management. Those with management responsibilities at all levels carry out their tasks capably. The recommendations from the previous inspection report have been addressed. The school is dynamically and sensitively led. Those in senior positions constitute a highly effective and hard-working team. The needs of the pupils are their foremost consideration. The senior staff demonstrate a keenness to identify the needs of the school through secure processes of self-evaluation, and are dedicated to improving the pupils' educational experience through thorough and inclusive planning. The requisite policies are in place and implemented. Safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive; due regard is paid to health and safety and all appropriate checks on staff and governors are made and recorded appropriately in a centralised register. An effective system for staff review exists for teachers, and a similar scheme for non-teaching staff is being implemented. Regular staff training takes place which is well designed to meet the school's needs. Special attention is given to the induction of new staff.
- 2.13 Links between the school and parents are excellent. The school is keen to develop further this partnership. The Parents' Association provides valued support for the school, particularly in fund-raising. Regular Newsletters, the school's magazine and the increasing use of the Intranet greatly enhance communication. Parents receive regular reports which indicate current attainment and many advise on how performance may be improved. Parents' evenings take place on a regular basis. The parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires confirm their satisfaction with the education provided. They are most positive about the range of educational experiences offered, the management of the school and the attitudes and standards of behaviour promoted. A few parents expressed dissatisfaction at the help provided regarding special educational needs. However, inspectors found the quality of learning support to be effective. A comprehensive complaints policy is in place.

### **3. ACTION POINTS**

#### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

#### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Extend careers advice to include pupils in the lower school.
2. Extend the high quality marking practices, evident in some subjects, across all departments.

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed a sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Jenny Longbourne

Reporting Inspector

Mr Philip Skelker

Team inspector, Headmaster, HMC and SHMIS school