

Frederick Bremer School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	103094
Local authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	376818
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2012
Lead inspector	John Daniell HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	878
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Howard
Headteacher	Ruth Woodward
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Daniell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Redpath	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jennifer Barker	Additional inspector
Kuljit Rahelu	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 34 lessons taught by 33 teachers. Meetings were held with members of staff, groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at school self-evaluation and improvement documentation, policies and procedures, samples of students' work and achievement data. The inspection team scrutinised 343 questionnaires from parents and carers.

Information about the school

Frederick Bremer School is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school. There are many more boys on the school roll than girls. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is high and the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The proportions of students who speak English as an additional language and of disabled students and those with special educational needs are also well above average. The school hosts an on-site provision for students with autism. The school meets the current government floor standard.

The school has engineering status and holds a number of accreditations including the International School award, the Eco Schools award, the Healthy Schools award and Investors in People (Bronze).

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- Frederick Bremer is a satisfactory school. Students enter the school with levels of prior attainment which are well below the national average and many have low levels of literacy. Current available data indicate that, in some areas, some students are making good progress, given their starting points. However, attainment is low and students make satisfactory progress overall.
- Achievement is satisfactory, including for disabled students and those with special educational needs and for those who speak English as an additional language.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall but the proportion of good and better teaching is increasing. In some lessons observed, students made good progress because teachers made more effective use of available information on the needs of individual students when planning their lessons. However, in a number of lessons, students were not challenged enough and in some instances, students were all given the same activity regardless of their ability.
- Marking is variable across the school. The better marking guides students to the next steps in their learning, but in other instances, marking simply affirms their efforts and does not help them to improve.
- Students' behaviour is a positive feature of the school and is generally good in lessons. Where behaviour impedes on learning, this is often linked to the quality of teaching. Around the school, students conduct themselves well and are courteous to one another and to other members of the school community. Consequently, students feel safe in school.
- Attendance rates have improved over time and are above average. The school provides a safe environment for students and arrangements for the safeguarding of students meet statutory requirements.

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- Leaders and managers demonstrate a sound understanding of school improvement strategies. Staffing changes at senior level have provided an opportunity to refine some of the school's procedures and policies. Systems are in place to monitor, evaluate and review the school's performance, although the school acknowledges that further fine-tuning is required, for example greater in-depth analysis for the performance of groups of students.
- The curriculum serves the needs of students adequately and the school's engineering specialism enhances the provision.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching and learning by:
 - sharing the existing good practice more widely
 - implementing and evaluating the recently developed strategies to raise levels of literacy
 - ensuring all teachers make effective use of available student data to plan their lessons so that the needs of all groups of students are met
 - ensuring marking is consistent and developmental in its focus, and that students act on the advice offered.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - maximising the use of data to analyse the performance of different groups of learners
 - training all year group leaders to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning
 - monitoring the quality of teaching more closely and refining the systems for recording teachers' performance in the classroom
 - updating some of the school policies and procedures to reflect recent changes in staffing.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students' learning and progress are satisfactory in lessons. Several students have lower than expected levels of literacy which acts as a barrier to progress. Consequently, the school is rightly focusing on raising levels of literacy through targeted intervention. Parents and carers believe that their children make good

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progress at the school. In those lessons where better progress is made, inspectors saw students more engaged in their learning as a direct response to stimulating activities and to opportunities provided to discuss their ideas. For example in a science lesson, the teacher encouraged students to design their own predator and to discuss their ideas with their peers. In the better lessons, teachers plan for learning which makes effective use of available information on students' individual needs. As a result, the work is correctly pitched, targets are appropriate and students are challenged.

Attainment over time has increased from below to broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, was 50% in 2011. Current available data, which includes improved GCSE grades in mathematics, indicate that standards are nearing those set nationally. Overall, therefore, from low starting points achievement is satisfactory. Different groups of students, however, make variable progress. Those students designated as having a higher level of need on the special educational needs register underperformed in 2011, although the school provided individual case studies to explain this. Girls achieve more highly than boys, a trend which is reflected nationally. Students who speak English as an additional language achieve satisfactorily as a result of the wide range of intervention and support they receive. Information gathered from more recent data demonstrates that students of White British, Caribbean and Pakistani heritages achieved significantly below similar groups nationally, whereas other minority ethnic groups achieve broadly in line with the national average. The resourced provision for students with autism secures satisfactory outcomes. Students known to be eligible for free school meals achieve less well than those nationally. Data presented by the school demonstrate that the school is steadily narrowing gaps in performance compared to all students nationally.

Quality of teaching

As a result of an improving profile of satisfactory and better teaching, students' outcomes are improving over time. In the more effective lessons, teachers make skilful use of questioning to test for understanding at various points in the lesson, and sustain students' interest by keeping the pace of the teaching swift and offering a range of stimulating activities. These teachers plan activities which provide an appropriate level of challenge. Any additional adults in the classroom are well deployed to facilitate the learning and progress of those students requiring extra support. In an effective English lesson on developing an understanding of the characters in Shakespeare's work, the teacher provided an excellent range of activities incorporating freeze-frame techniques and made skilful use of assessment. Where the quality of teaching is less effective, teachers deliver the same content to all students in the class, thus slowing down the rate of learning and progress for many. In some lessons, there are missed opportunities to help students develop as learners, because the teacher talks too much and students become passive. Some teachers do not maximise the opportunity to teach more creatively, which is a missed opportunity, because students' behaviour in lessons is largely supportive. Indeed, on some occasions, students' behaviour is good despite satisfactory teaching.

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The quality of marking of students' work is variable within and between subjects. Best practice is demonstrated through regular marking which indicates at which level the student is working, and through the provision of clearly identified next-step moves to attain the next level. On some occasions, although the teacher offers helpful guidance through marking, this is not necessarily followed up by the student.

Parents and carers hold positive views on the quality of teaching. Indeed, inspectors saw effective use of teaching to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, in a good Year 7 English lesson, the teacher encouraged students to think about dreams and describe them, making use of a variety of senses. Students are presented with several opportunities in lessons to work collaboratively and to support one another. Topics presented in lessons often draw well on the heritage and culture of students who, between them, speak over 65 different languages.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' good behaviour, which has strengthened over time, has helped to create a safe and secure school environment. A large proportion of parents and carers believe that their children feel safe at school and this is endorsed by students themselves. The school sets high expectations for behaviour and students usually respond accordingly. Students are offered several opportunities to contribute towards the well-ordered community and school prefects work in partnership with staff to sustain good standards of behaviour and safety. Students are usually punctual and respond positively to staff's reminders to adhere to school procedures. Behaviour in lessons is not a barrier to learning and progress, although there are occasions when low-level disruption has to be addressed. The school has various systems to support students who do not adhere to its high standards and these are effective, as demonstrated by the halving of fixed-term exclusions. Additional resources including the learning support unit, are used effectively to support students who present more challenging behaviour. There are few incidents of bullying, and the school has taught students how to identify the different forms bullying can take, including cyber bullying, and to report any incidents when they do occur. Students say they appreciate the anti-bullying squad which comprises of students who have received training, and many choose to refer problems to this team first. Some parents and carers added comments to the questionnaires to express concern about incidents of bullying. However, inspectors saw evidence of effective systems and procedures for dealing with bullying when it does occur and this was confirmed by a scrutiny of behavioural records.

Despite many students facing circumstances which make them vulnerable to underachievement, attendance is above average. This reflects the school's strenuous strategies to promote good attendance.

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Leadership and management

Leaders, managers and members of the governing body seek to improve students' outcomes through a range of initiatives, some of which are quite recent. School improvement planning strategies satisfactorily hold middle leaders to account for the performance of their areas, and these post holders appreciate the opportunities made available to them for their professional development. Progress made since the previous inspection in addressing the areas for improvement is variable, with more progress being made in raising standards in mathematics. The headteacher has managed the amalgamation of the two previous schools well, and has recently made some key appointments at middle and senior level, with a view to effecting change. Processes to track students' progress are embedded and rigorous. However, leaders and managers recognise that some systems are at an early stage of development. For example, a substantial amount of monitoring currently takes place but impact arising out of this on different groups of students cannot always be demonstrated. A positive step forward is the recently introduced rolling cycle of internal reviews which involves external consultants. However, there are missed opportunities to maximise the use of data gathered by the school in relation to the quality of teaching. The current system is not as refined as it might be to identify strengths and areas for development and promote the sharing of good practice. While heads of department have all been trained to observe lessons, year group leaders have not yet had this opportunity. The use of good teachers to coach those whose performance is satisfactory is, however, contributing to raising standards.

The governing body has restructured its committees; introduced improved induction processes for new members, and demonstrates a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and what is needed to sustain improvement. Leaders, managers and the governing body ensure that arrangements for safeguarding students are met. The school is effective in tackling discrimination in any form and this contributes significantly to nurturing the harmonious community. However, the school is not consistently effective in ensuring that rates of progress by different groups of students are equal. Systems which are central to school improvement are in place and key staff's roles and responsibilities have been carefully adapted to play to strengths. For example, a policy to strengthen literacy across the school has recently been reviewed and implemented and its impact will be monitored by a working group. Capacity to sustain improvement is therefore satisfactory.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and satisfactorily meets the needs of students. It is enhanced through the provision of construction courses and through other subjects relating to the engineering specialism. Students appreciate the wide range of after-school activities provided but the school does not monitor participation by groups. Opportunities provided through the curriculum to develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are used well. A skills-based curriculum for Year 7 is currently under consideration.

The school endeavours to engage parents and carers in the education of their children, including those who are less inclined to work with the school. A few parents

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and carers who responded to the questionnaires expressed a desire for improved communication between them and the school. Inspectors noted that the school posts home a detailed newsletter and also surveys parents' and carers' views at school events. The school also plans to engage parents and carers more through its recently developed managed learning environment.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



27 January 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Frederick Bremer School, Walthamstow, E17 4EY

Thank you very much for making the inspection team feel welcome when we visited your school recently. You told us you feel safe in school and the staff encourage you to do as well as you can. Here are our findings.

- Frederick Bremer School provides you with a satisfactory standard of education and your achievement is satisfactory.
- Teaching is satisfactory but the proportion of good and better teaching is increasing. In the better lessons, your teachers make full use of the information they have about you to plan lessons which are more exciting and challenging. Marking does not always indicate clearly enough how you can improve, and how you can move up to the next level of attainment.
- Your behaviour is good, although there are occasions when low-level disruption interferes with your rate of progress in the classroom.
- Your attendance is above the national average.
- Leaders, managers and members of the governing body are aware of what has to be done to improve your outcomes. Following some recent appointments to the staff, the school is using this opportunity to review school policies and procedures. The school recognises the importance of monitoring the impact of its actions on you as individuals.
- Your curriculum is broad and balanced and the engineering specialism enhances the provision.

We have asked your school's leaders and managers to increase the proportion of good and better teaching and to strengthen leadership at middle and senior levels by maximising the use of data and monitoring the quality of teaching more closely. We ask that you all concentrate in lessons at all times.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector

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