

Frederick Gent School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	112941
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	378613
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2012
Lead inspector	Judith Matharu 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	875
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Thacker
Headteacher	Martyn Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2009
School address	Mansfield Road South Normanton Alfreton DE55 2ER
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Christine Heppleston

Additional inspector

Gillian Martin

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Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 42 lessons, including four joint observations undertaken with senior leaders. In total, 42 teachers were observed. Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, representatives of the governing body and groups of students from all year groups. 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 a range of students' work and school documentation, including 190 questionnaires from parents and carers, 56 from staff and 145 from students.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It serves primarily the South Normanton and Pinxton areas of north east Derbyshire. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals and the percentage of disabled students and those with special educational needs are below average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds and the proportions of students from minority ethnic groups, or who speak English as an additional language, are very small.

The school meets the government's current floor standards for students' attainment and progress. Frederick Gent holds the Healthy Schools status, Artsmark Silver and Investor in People Award.

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

Key findings

- Frederick Gent is a good school which has steadily improved since the last inspection. It is not yet outstanding as rates of progress vary between subjects. However, a strong and determined focus on raising achievement is evident. Students, staff and the majority of parents and carers have a positive view of the school.
- Students reach standards that are either at, or above, the national average in most subjects, including English or mathematics, and they achieve well. However, although good overall, rates of progress vary between subjects due to inconsistencies in applying the school’s systems and strategies for learning and teaching. Good support is provided for disabled students and those with special educational needs; consequently these pupils make similarly good progress to other students.
- Good teaching contributes to the improvements seen in attainment and progress. At its best, tasks are well matched to students’ abilities, questioning is challenging and students have opportunities to respond to tasks in a variety of ways. Consequently, students are highly motivated and progress is rapid. However, progress slows when teachers do not plan well enough to meet their different needs. Similarly, when teachers do not probe and extend students’ thinking or challenge them to extend their responses to tasks, progress is slower. The quality of marking is variable; not all of this matches the best practice evident.
- Behaviour both in lessons and around the school is consistently good and good attention is paid to keeping students safe. A minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about behaviour. However, inspection evidence indicates that behaviour in lessons and around school is good with students displaying very positive attitudes to learning. The school recognises the need to improve liaison and consultation with parents and carers.
- The headteacher’s commitment and vigorous, determined leadership is recognised by students, parents and carers and staff alike. He, the senior staff and governors, have an excellent understanding of the school’s strengths and areas for improvement. They manage staff performance well and lead

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improvements in teaching well. Together, they are maintaining a drive for ongoing improvement that has energised the whole staff team.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help more students to make outstanding progress in all subjects by:
 - ensuring that all teachers consistently apply the school's principles for effective learning and teaching and routinely use assessment information to plan their work
 - ensuring that the best practice in both teaching and subject leadership is shared more widely.

- Improve teaching to the next level by:
 - ensuring all teachers consistently plan and implement varied learning activities that fully meet the needs of all students in their classes
 - encouraging teachers to challenge students through extended questioning, to introduce elements of choice and decision-making into learning activities and to encourage independence
 - reducing the variability in marking and written feedback provided for students.

- Strengthen communications and consultations with parents and carers.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students join the school with standards that are broadly average and then they make good progress to reach above average standards in many subjects in Year 11. In particular, there has been a consistent upward trend in performance since the last inspection, particularly in English, where performance in 2011 was just above national standards, and in mathematics. Higher ability students performed well with a record number of higher grades achieved. Although the performance of lower ability students dipped in 2011, this has been addressed through close targeting of this group of students. The school's tracking indicates that this group is back on course this year and making good progress. Similarly, disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress, as do those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. These students' individual needs are well known and they benefit from good pastoral and academic support. Some teachers reinforce aspects of literacy well; efforts to establish a reading culture are having impact on a significant number of students, although more could be done to reinforce literacy across the whole curriculum.

Inspectors agree with most parents and carers who believe that their children are making good progress. The vast majority of students enjoy learning, work at a good pace and want to succeed.

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One factor in the improvements made since the last inspection is the highly sophisticated and robust tracking of students' progress at all levels in the school. Students demonstrate good understanding of their current levels and how to improve. Most students are confident in this respect and able to explain what they need to do to achieve a higher level. However, although progress is good overall, some inconsistencies remain between subjects. Achievement in several areas, including science, was below that achieved in English and mathematics in 2011. This year, progress levels in the targeted subjects are improving and more consistent with that achieved in the core subjects.

Quality of teaching

The attention paid to improving the quality of teaching in recent years has paid dividends. Teachers' use of assessment data to plan the next steps in learning is a key development. The majority of teachers use this information very well, although some inconsistencies remain. Teachers routinely support students through helping them to understand how to assess and improve their own work.

Another key factor in improving learning is the consistent focus on detailed lesson planning and careful attention paid to structuring learning in clearly-defined phases throughout each lesson. Evidence gathered from students' exercise books showed that books are regularly marked and there are examples of high quality marking and detailed feedback to students, although this is not yet consistent in all lessons.

In an outstanding Year 8 English lesson, the teacher's rapport with his class was immediately evident. He probed students' understanding through excellent extended questioning as they prepared to write about a ballad they are studying. The success criteria were made clear; students reflected on their own targets and identified what they needed to do to improve their writing. An excellent balance of teacher's talk and students' discussion was achieved as students explored their thinking with another student of their choice. Finally, students of all abilities were given choices about the written task to complete. They worked eagerly, relishing the opportunity for choosing their own tasks. The teacher selected one student's work and through a visualiser, displayed her opening paragraph, asking the rest of the class for feedback on progress in meeting her writing target. Learning was rapid and the sense of achievement palpable.

In another excellent Year 10 geography lesson, students handled complex material about the causes of flooding with ease, including perceptive understanding of the responsibilities of government. Students' social and moral development was encouraged as they demonstrated empathy, concern and compassion for victims of flooding, in response to their teacher's challenging questioning. They demonstrated mature understanding of the underlying issues. A variety of tasks were set to meet learners' differing needs with the teacher making a clear connection between tasks and target grades. These and others are examples of highly successful practice that

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could be more widely shared across the staff to ensure greater consistency.

When teaching is less successful, the learning activities do not always fully meet the varying needs of all students in the group. Sometimes, teachers' questioning is too superficial and does not challenge students to elaborate on their responses. Further, some opportunities for students to make decisions and gain some independence in learning are not maximised.

Overall, students, parents and carers agree that teaching is consistently good. Excellent relationships and students' enthusiastic attitudes support this and result in a highly positive atmosphere for learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students are courteous and welcoming and their behaviour in lessons and around school is consistently good. The atmosphere in school is calm and disciplined; students enjoy positive relationships with members of staff and each other. Students are highly positive about their school; the vast majority enjoy coming to school as evidenced by their attendance, which is above average. Students report that they feel safe and well cared for. They have confidence in their staff and appreciate the consistency of application of the school's behaviour management procedures. In particular, students speak positively of the school's efforts to ensure internet safety; they welcome the advice and guidance from teachers in the information and communication technology department regarding cyber safety.

The majority of parents and carers are positive about behaviour and feel students are safe and well cared for. However, a significant minority expressed concerns about behaviour. The inspection found little evidence to support these concerns. Students interviewed feel that behaviour is good and indicated that the behaviour evident throughout the inspection is typical of behaviour at other times. They report that bullying is minimal and not a significant problem in this school. Students are confident that it is robustly dealt with, when it occurs. The school's behaviour records and the decrease in exclusions in recent years support this.

Leadership and management

The headteacher leads the school with energy and passion. Comments at inspection from students, staff, parents and carers indicate considerable respect for the determined way that he has pursued whole-school improvement. The cornerstones of this improvement rest on a rigorous and robust system for tracking and using progress data to check on the performance of individuals and groups, together with the improvement of teaching across the school. The headteacher is well supported by a strong senior leadership team, who share his vision for the school's development. Middle leaders contribute well to ongoing school improvement; they have a good grasp of their responsibilities in this and the vast majority lead their teams purposefully and effectively. Senior leaders are alert to some inconsistencies in leadership and aware of the importance in tackling these robustly.

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The school has developed a good curriculum that is broad and varied, allowing students to pursue a variety of relevant courses, appropriate to their needs and interests. Within this, provision for students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good, as evidenced by students' positive, respectful attitudes to diversity and difference and their strong sense of right and wrong.

Governors are knowledgeable about the work of the school and hold it to account well, challenging suitably when they feel things might be improved. Together with senior leaders, they are not complacent about the school's work; for example, they are aware that some parents and carers feel they would like more input into school matters, such as the arrangements for parents' and carers' evenings, and acknowledge that communications with parents and carers could be strengthened.

Safeguarding procedures are effective and fully meet all current government requirements. Some aspects are features of best practice, particularly the fortnightly safeguarding meetings where all aspects are reviewed, evaluated and revised, if appropriate. The school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity and the tackling of discrimination is exemplified by the close attention paid to supporting students with specific needs and those whose circumstances render them vulnerable, to ensure they make good progress and narrow the gaps with other groups. The ongoing improvement drive, together with a strong track record of continuous improvement, indicates that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

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.



12 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Frederick Gent School, South Normanton, DE55 2ER

Thank you for your warm and friendly welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed meeting many of you and looking at your work. You told us Frederick Gent is a good school and we agree with you. We found that your school has steadily improved and provides you with a good standard of education. We noted a number of strengths: teaching is good and we were pleased to see the positive relationships across the school. Achievement has steadily improved – most of you are now achieving well with results in Year 11 that are often above the national average. We were also impressed by your behaviour and attitudes to school. The school is well led and managed by your headteacher – many of you told us how much you appreciate his firm but fair leadership and how well he and the staff know you all.

We have asked your school to build on several aspects:

- check that teachers in all subjects work in the same way and use information about your work and progress to plan their lessons
- ensure all teachers plan lesson activities that meet the needs of everyone and challenge all of you to do your best
- encourage teachers to introduce elements of choice in activities and encourage you to be independent at times in your learning
- strengthen communications with your parents and carers so they might be more involved in school matters.

You can support this by taking responsibility when it is offered, acting on your teachers' advice and contributing positively in lessons.

I hope you continue to enjoy school life and work hard to achieve your best.

Yours sincerely

Judith Matharu
Her Majesty's Inspector

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