

The Freeston Academy

Favell Avenue, Normanton, Wakefield, WF6 1HZ

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement 3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement 3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The proportion of students achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen slightly but not enough students across the academy are making consistently good progress to achieve their potential.
- Recently the Principal and the governors have been focussed on the legalities and financial work surrounding the academy conversion, which had led to some slippage in making regular checks on aspects of the school's performance. This situation has been exacerbated by staffing difficulties at senior leadership level.
- Although there is some good teaching, there is not enough effective teaching to ensure that all students make sufficient progress and not all teachers consistently implement the academy's behaviour management policy.
- A minority of students lack the ability to manage their own behaviour well in lessons, which can occasionally interrupt the learning of their classmates.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently begun partnership with the outstanding academy is providing practical support and guidance designed to strengthen the work of leaders and managers and to improve teaching and learning.
- Support staff make a good contribution to the learning of lower ability students, working well with teaching staff so that these groups frequently make better progress than their classmates.
- Students feel safe.
- Effective provision for the nurture and well-being of students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and those with the most challenging behaviour, ensures attendance is improving and the need for exclusions has drastically reduced.
- Students achieve well in the academy's specialist subjects of business studies and information and communication technology (ICT).

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 teachers in 36 lessons, including some joint observations and shorter visits to lessons with members of the academy’s senior team. Observations of other aspects of the academy’s work were also made, including visits to ‘The Zone’ inclusion centre, individual and small-group literacy sessions, form time and several meetings with students from all year groups.
- Meetings were with the Chair of the Governing Body and the chair of the standards committee, the Principal of the partnership academy, academy staff, including senior and middle leaders. Informal discussions also took place with staff and students.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the academy’s self-evaluation and development plans, its safeguarding policies, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

James Kilner, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Leigh	Additional Inspector
Derek Barnes	Additional Inspector
Peter McKay	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The former Freeston Business Enterprise College became The Freeston Academy through the academy conversion route in November 2011.
- It is an average sized secondary school.
- Under a memorandum of understanding, Freeston works in partnership with Wakefield City Academy (the partnership academy) which was judged by Ofsted to be outstanding.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage and there are very few students at the early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which includes students in receipt of free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority, and those from service families is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is slightly above average.
- The school has a facility, the Zone, which is an on-site nurture unit staffed by teachers, a learning mentor and support staff.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also slightly above average.
- A small number of students with severe behavioural difficulties attend courses off site at one of the academy's partner organisations, The Lighthouse, for very short periods of time.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy's specialist subjects are in business studies and ICT.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Working with the partnership academy, rapidly raise attainment and rates of progress for all groups of students in all subjects, through teaching that is consistently good, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - make effective use of information about students' attainment to plan activities that accurately match their learning needs
 - create more opportunities for students to learn by themselves
 - rigorously apply the academy's systems for managing behaviour so that learning is not interrupted and students become more skilled in managing their own behaviour
 - provide better marking and feedback during lessons so students know how well they are doing and how to improve the quality, quantity and presentation of their work.
- Ensure all leaders, including governors, focus more on the drive to accelerate improvement by:
 - enabling all staff to become skilled in analysing performance data and in making accurate judgements about students' levels of attainment and progress
 - making sure existing good practice in teaching is used to develop the skills of all teachers to the highest standards
 - making sure the performance management of all staff, including the Principal, is directly linked to rapid improvements in students' achievement and behaviour.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- When students join in Year 7, their levels of attainment are lower than those of other students nationally. The proportion achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen over the past three years, although the numbers making the progress expected of them are below average.
- The proportion of students gaining the top A and A* grades is strengthening with results improving this year. The number of students achieving five GCSE at grades A* to C has improved. Results in the specialist subjects of business studies and ICT improved this year and are proving to be the academy's strongest subjects.
- In all other year groups across the academy, not enough students are making the required progress. This is because teaching is not yet consistently good and, up until recently, the scrutiny of data on students' achievement by senior and subject leaders has not been effective in spotting gaps early enough.
- The use of the pupil premium funding is proving effective. A fund coordinator is assisting in targeting support where it is needed, for example, in small group work in mathematics where students have underperformed in the past. As a result of good mentoring and support, the average point scores for students who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding are making good progress and are closing the gap in attainment with their peers. Predictions for these students indicate that 80% are on target to achieve a grade C or above in English in the 2013 GCSE examinations.
- The academy has a policy that it does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve better than similar students nationally. They now make good progress in English and mathematics because their needs are identified early on and they all receive the appropriate support, reflecting the commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all. Students attending the Lighthouse make up ground in improving their literacy and numeracy skills. Students in the Zone are helped to get on well with their work.
- A new focus on the teaching of English and mathematics skills across the curriculum, the 'Manglish project', is beginning to ensure students make better progress in developing their literacy skills. It is at an early stage of having a demonstrable impact on students' numeracy skills.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- While there are many examples of teaching which are good and occasionally outstanding, teaching overall is not yet effective enough to enable enough students to learn well.
- Planning for lessons varies in quality with the objectives being too general and sometimes imprecise as to how the activity will raise students' levels of achievement. Teachers are not making sufficient use of information about students' achievement to match activities to their needs and abilities. Consequently, not all students are presented with appropriately challenging tasks or enough opportunities to demonstrate their understanding while working by themselves.
- Teachers' checks on progress during lessons are not thorough enough and some students become restless, losing interest and concentration when left too long, having either finished an activity or are finding it too demanding. On the few occasions when behaviour deteriorates, teachers are not consistent in their application of systems for managing students' behaviour.
- Strong features of teaching include teachers' good subject knowledge, which ensures that misconceptions are soon remedied, good relationships and classroom displays which promote high expectations and encourage students' resilience and determination.
- Teachers' marking sometimes celebrates students' achievements and guides them precisely as to

how to reach the next levels. This practice is not commonplace; consequently, a good number of students are not sure about their current levels and how to improve further. Furthermore, teachers are not challenging the unacceptable levels of untidy doodling and graffiti on work books and folders.

- Where deployed effectively, teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to students' learning. Their good subject knowledge and positive relationships with students ensure that their groups often make better progress than their classmates.
- The academy is aware of parental concerns expressed on Parent View about the lack of regular homework for students and is to rectify this shortcoming with immediate effect.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour is not yet good because not all students have consistently positive attitudes to learning. The poor behaviour of a minority inhibits the learning of others in a small number of lessons. Inspectors agree with students who comment that teachers are not consistent in the way that they implement systems for managing behaviour.
- The Zone ensures that students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable remain involved in their learning when facing difficult personal circumstances. Students who briefly attend the off-site behavioural unit, The Lighthouse, speak glowingly of their experiences and how it has assisted them in improving both their attitudes and achievement. The academy checks on these students' safety and attendance at this off site provision.
- Students say that they feel safe in the academy, and the small number of parents who responded to Parent View largely agree. Students show a good understanding of disability, racist and homophobic bullying. Records of incidents and discussions with students reveal that bullying of any kind is a rarity and, should it happen, it is tackled successfully.
- Typically, relationships between students and adults are positive and students have good manners.
- Persistent absence has reduced significantly and overall attendance has improved to be in line with the national average.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The leadership and management of the academy are not yet good because achievement, behaviour and teaching and learning require improvement. The system of making checks on provision and performance has only recently got back on track. Inspectors agree with the highly accurate view of the academy about its strengths and weaknesses.
- Performance management of staff, including that of the Principal, has not been effective enough in ensuring that students achieve consistently well. Senior leaders have only recently become more adept at holding colleagues to account and in checking on the accuracy of their assessments. The Principal and governors are now raising expectations of all senior and other leaders with particular responsibilities as to what students can achieve and ensuring that any remaining weaknesses are fully eradicated.
- Recently introduced student checking systems, devised with the aid of the partner academy, are providing a more accurate picture of the rates of students' achievement. However, senior leaders are at an early stage of being fully conversant with how to use it. Consequently, the data gathered has not been used to full effect in teachers' planning or in rapidly closing gaps in achievement between different groups of students.
- A robust and impressive teaching and learning policy has recently been introduced. The partner academy's status as a teaching school provides the expertise needed to check the accuracy of

assessments and students' work. The academy's specialist curriculum is effective in promoting students business and enterprise and ICT skills. Initiatives such as the 'Young Apprentice' partnerships with local and national companies and links to communities in Africa raise the students' aspirations and widen career choices.

- Overall, the curriculum requires improvement because it is not yet providing all students with the opportunity to make accelerated progress in their learning.
- In order to tackle low levels of literacy, an intensive programme designed to boost students' reading and writing skills has begun. There are early indications that this is proving effective in improving the skills needed to enable the youngest students to have access to the wider curriculum.
- The strength of the professional relationship with the partner academy, coupled with the stability at senior leadership level, gives the academy the ability to carry on making the necessary improvements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance requires improvement. Although governors have a largely accurate view of the quality of education provided by the academy, including the quality of teaching, they have not ensured that achievement has been as good as it needed to be. They are able to challenge and support the academy's work but have concentrated too much on outcomes at GCSE rather than considering the performance of students across the academy. Consequently, the performance management of staff has not taken enough consideration of outcomes for all students. Pay progression is now to be linked more closely to improved outcomes for all students. Governors have a clear overview of the way that the academy uses its resources and are particularly adept when managing the budget. They have shown great skill when dealing with complicated legal and financial issues in the run up to academy conversion. They are clear about how the pupil premium funding is spent and are closely involved in checking on its effectiveness in raising achievement. Thanks to recent intense and effective training, governors are highly adept at data analysis and are well placed to make effective use of the new systems to better hold leaders to account. Governors ensure the academy meets its statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137655
Local authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	406680

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	932
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Pell
Principal	Gillian Metcalfe
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01924 302560
Fax number	01924 302564
Email address	info@thefreestonacademy.com

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012

