

The Freeston Academy

Favell Avenue, Normanton, Wakefield, WF6 1HZ

Inspection dates 7–8 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Students' behaviour over time is inadequate. A considerable number of lessons each week are disrupted by poor behaviour, particularly at Key Stage 3. Leaders have not previously acted swiftly enough to address these issues; however, they are now taking appropriate action.
- A small minority of students lack an understanding of the need for good manners and do not treat each other or adults in the academy with respect.
- Not all students recognise the importance of good attendance at school and some lessons are disturbed by students arriving late.
- There is too much variation in the achievement of different groups of students. Disadvantaged students do not attain as well as others, particularly in mathematics. Progress is slower at Key Stage 3 than it is at Key Stage 4.
- Teaching requires improvement. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what students can achieve and do not set work which is challenging enough, especially for the most able.
- Marking and feedback do not always provide students with clear enough guidance about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Leadership, including governance, requires improvement. Not all staff, including middle leaders, have a shared understanding of what improvements to teaching, achievement and behaviour need to look like.
- Action planning for improvement lacks clear measures of success. Leaders and governors do not always check thoroughly to make certain that the strategies they implement are bringing about rapid improvement to all areas needing improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Students say that they feel safe in the academy.
- Leaders have had success in bringing about some improvements; for example, in teaching and achievement, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- Students' progress accelerates in Key Stage 4. Over the last three years the proportion of students leaving the academy with five good GCSEs including English and mathematics has increased. In 2014, the proportion attaining this measure was in line with the national average.
- Students achieve well in the academy's specialism of business studies. An exciting range of opportunities such as 'The Apprentice' make a good contribution to their personal development.
- Current students who are disabled or have special educational needs are making good progress from their starting points because of the good support which they receive.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed parts of a number of lessons across the academy. Two of these lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors observed students' behaviour around the academy as well as in lessons. They talked with students informally about the academy and their learning, as well as holding more formal meetings with groups of students of different abilities and from both key stages.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, members of the teaching staff, and the governing body. In addition, inspectors met with the Executive Principal of the partnership academy.
- The views of 79 parents who responded to the online parental questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, as well as information collected by the academy about the views of parents. In addition, inspectors scrutinised responses to a staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team examined a range of documentation, including data about students' achievement from internal tracking systems and analysis provided by academy leaders. Inspectors also scrutinised leaders' monitoring records, including minutes of governing body meetings and information provided relating to attendance, safeguarding and behaviour.

Inspection team

Christine Birchall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Judith Gooding	Additional Inspector
Fiona Dixon	Additional Inspector
Alison Stott	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005, as amended, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- Freeston Academy is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium funding is slightly below average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The attainment of students on entry to the Academy in Year 7 is typically well below average.
- The academy makes alternative provision for a very small number of students with The Lighthouse Group or at the UCAN Centre in Pontefract.
- Under a memorandum of understanding the academy works in partnership with Wakefield City Academy, which has been judged to be outstanding. Consequently, the academy receives support from a National Leader in Education.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher was absent due to illness for a substantial amount of time during the last academic year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' behaviour and attitudes to learning, especially at Key Stage 3, so that they are at least consistently good, by:
 - ensuring that students have a clear understanding of the academy's expectations of their behaviour and attitudes to learning
 - making certain that all teachers consistently apply the academy's behaviour management policy and have high expectations of how students should behave in lessons and around academy
 - leaders analysing information on students' behaviour, attendance and punctuality to accurately identify the most important actions needed to bring about improvement in these areas and that the impact of the actions taken is closely checked upon.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching students receive and the achievement they make, particularly in Key Stage 3, so that both are at least consistently good over time, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what students can achieve so that they ensure a good level of challenge for all abilities
 - making certain that all teachers provide students with opportunities to write in detail, and that they have high expectations about the quality of written work that they will accept
 - ensuring that the teaching of mathematics enables students to apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding to solving real life problems
 - making sure that teachers use information about how well students are learning to set work in lessons which meets the needs of all abilities of students, including the most able
 - ensuring that all marking and feedback provide students with precise guidance about what they need to do to improve their work, and that students are consistently provided with time to improve their work in response to teachers' advice.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, in bringing about school improvement, by:
 - ensuring that all staff, including middle leaders, have a shared understanding of the academy's

improvement priorities, and that action planning includes clear success criteria so leaders can check effectively on the impact of actions taken to improve the academy

- making sure that when leaders evaluate how well the academy is performing they analyse the information they have collected very thoroughly in order to check whether improvement activities are being successful
- taking steps to ensure that the good practice which exists across the academy is shared and embedded.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Senior leaders have shown that they are able to secure improvement in the academy because outcomes for students in Year 11 have improved over the last three years to be broadly in line with the national average in most key measures. However, during the headteacher's unavoidable absence, leaders focused their attentions more on improving students' achievement at Key Stage 4 than on students' behaviour across the academy.
- Since the return of the headteacher, there has been an increased drive, and structures and systems for managing behaviour and improving achievement at Key Stage 3 have been put in place. However, they are relatively new and have not yet had time to have an impact. Leaders have not been rigorous enough in challenging the consistency with which systems are being used by all staff, and as a result, there is too much behaviour which is unacceptable, particularly at Key Stage 3.
- Since September leaders have re-evaluated how the pupil premium funding is spent in response to the gaps in the 2014 achievement of the disadvantaged students compared to their peers in the academy and nationally. This year the funding is more closely targeted and actions have included an external audit of how the funding is spent. Spending now includes mentoring and support for students, mathematics clinics and resources for revision. A monitoring and evaluation group now meets fortnightly to monitor the impact.
- Senior leaders have taken significant steps to increase the rigour and frequency of checking on how well students are learning. There are now six 'learning cycles' a year, when leaders take data for all students from each department, and check this against work scrutiny and what students tell them. Work has been done to ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate. These actions have helped leaders identify students who are underachieving and to provide them with additional support; consequently, this has brought about improvements in their achievement at Key Stage 4. There are now regular meetings for key personnel to check on the progress of key groups and disadvantaged students at Key Stage 4, but this same level of rigour has yet to be embedded at Key Stage 3.
- Leaders have identified areas for improvement across the academy. However, action planning lacks clear measures of success and timescales; consequently, it is not easy for leaders, including governors, to check whether actions are bringing about improvement quickly enough.
- Middle leaders are expected to monitor the effectiveness of work in their areas of responsibility, but expectations of what activities they should be undertaking to achieve this, or how they should plan actions to bring about improvement are inconsistent. As a result, there is variation in practice and impact across the academy.
- A range of training is provided to teachers to help them improve their practice and there is evidence that this is working and that the overall quality of teaching is improving, particularly at Key Stage 4. Leaders use a range of evidence to check on the quality of teaching, including looking at students' books and undertaking lesson observations. Performance management targets for staff are now becoming more rigorous; however, some still lack precision and rigour.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and underpinned by a range of extra-curricular opportunities, including additional study sessions, and opportunities to be involved in the arts and sports. The business studies specialism provides students with effective opportunities to prepare for the world of work. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum should give students opportunities to be successful under the proposed national changes.
- Leaders ensure that students receive careers lessons throughout Years 7 to 11, with students in Year 11 receiving bespoke one-to-one careers guidance. There is also an annual 'employability day' and regular careers fairs. As a result, the number of students who leave the academy and are not in education, employment and training is low.
- While the academy works to foster good relations and tackle discrimination, the steps it takes to promote equality of opportunity for students require improvement, because there are still gaps in the achievement of particular groups. In addition, students spoken with say that they are not taught explicitly enough about topics such as democracy and the other key British values. An audit of opportunities to develop students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development has recently taken place and gaps have been identified; however, the gaps which have been identified have yet to be addressed. A number of students lack social skills and do not realise the importance of good manners and the need to work well with other people.
- All safeguarding requirements are met. All appropriate checks are undertaken when recruiting staff, and up-to-date training has been provided on child protection, child sexual exploitation and 'PREVENT'; training to help teachers to identify students who are at risk of extremism. Systems for checking the safety of students who attend alternative provision are robust. All students are placed only through the local authority provision team, and there is a dedicated vocational teaching assistant to support them and make daily checks on their

attendance, as well as their achievement.

- The academy has been supported by its partner academy, Wakefield City Academy, to develop the systems for monitoring how well students are learning. It has also received support with staff training and moderation to check that teachers are assessing accurately. The Executive Principal for the partner academy reports that staff are responsive and very keen to take opportunities to develop their practice.

■ The governance of the school:

- Since the last inspection, governors have become more robust in the steps which they take to find out first-hand how well the academy is doing. For example, they undertake short visits to lessons alongside senior leaders, and meet regularly with middle leaders to find out what is going on in their areas of responsibility. There is evidence in minutes of governors' meetings that they regularly ask challenging questions, and have high expectations of students. They have a good understanding of how the pupil premium funding has been spent, and are aware of the new systems which are in place to improve and monitor its impact. They check that performance management targets and professional development and training for teachers are enabling them to improve their practice, and that pay progression is linked to performance. Where teachers have underperformed they have been put on support plans and either improved or left the academy. However, governors were not aware of the extent to which students, parents and staff expressed concerns about behaviour. Governors do ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met; for example a number of them have undertaken safer recruitment training.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are inadequate

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is inadequate because there is too much variation in the way students behave. The majority of those who spoke to inspectors said that their lessons were regularly disrupted by low-level, poor behaviour which slowed down the pace of their learning. A considerable proportion of parents who responded to Parent View and over a quarter of staff who completed the staff questionnaire indicated that they had concerns about behaviour in the academy. The inspection confirmed that their concerns about behaviour were justified. Students were observed by the inspector shouting out, not listening to the teacher, and using their mobile phones to text in a considerable number of lessons.
- Teachers do not all use the academy behaviour management system consistently, which means that in some lessons students are not provided with clear enough guidance about behaviour expectations, or expectations about positive attitudes to learning such as presenting their work well, settling to work quickly and completing tasks to the best of their ability.
- Scrutiny of students' books indicated that there is quite a variation in the way students present their work; some present their work poorly and there was evidence of graffiti and inappropriate comments. Individual students' work across a number of subjects varies. It was clear that some students were being selective about where they would work hard; they produced much better quality work in some subjects than in others.
- Around the academy, particularly in the enclosed outside areas, some students' behaviour at lunchtime is boisterous. Staff who inspectors spoke to confirm that this is a regular occurrence.
- In the dining hall behaviour was seen to be calmer. Not all students showed an understanding of the importance of good manners; for example, many do not routinely hold doors for others to come through and many continued to text or play games on their phones while talking informally to adults and to the inspectors.
- There was some evidence of good and excellent behaviour, but students report that it depends on the subject or the teacher, and that teachers do not consistently apply the academy's behaviour management policy both in lessons and around academy. Some teachers, for example, do not challenge students when they have mobile phones in lessons or when they are late to class. To their credit, some students continue to work despite the disruptions in lessons. Older students say that behaviour improves and there are fewer disruptions to learning in Key Stage 4 because they get more mature.
- The academy keeps a range of behaviour records and information, but the records are not collated or analysed well enough, and therefore leaders are not yet in a better position to identify patterns and take action to prevent some problems from occurring. More systems are now in place to tackle poor behaviour and leaders are now starting to check more robustly that they are working. Senior leaders acknowledge that there is a lack of consistency in the way that staff apply academy policies.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement. Attendance is lower than average and the proportions of students who are persistently absent are higher than average. Some

students do not recognise the importance of good punctuality. Exclusion figures are also high. In both cases a significant number of these students are disadvantaged or are disabled or have special educational needs. Leaders have taken steps to address the issues. As a result, attendance since September has improved with the proportion of disadvantaged students who are persistently absent being reduced by almost half.

- Students report that they feel safe in academy and that relationships with staff are good as there is always someone they can talk to if they have concerns.
- According to students and academy records, there are a few incidents of bullying, but students say that these are dealt with effectively. Most students are aware of the different forms which bullying may take, including prejudice-based and cyber-bullying. However, Year 7 have not yet received any formal teaching on keeping themselves safe from, and what constitutes, bullying.
- The welfare of students who attend alternative provision is effectively monitored, and this ensures that they are supported to behave well and to be successful in their placements.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because over time it has failed to secure consistently good progress for all groups of students across all year groups, especially in Key Stage 3. However, leaders are now having some success in improving teaching at Key Stage 4 as seen in the improved year-on-year GCSE results.
- Not all teachers routinely use information about how well students are learning to set work which meets the needs of the different abilities. At times students are frequently set the same work to complete, and as a result, the most able are not given enough challenge while the least able struggle to understand and keep up.
- Teachers do not consistently provide students with opportunities for reading or for writing in detail across the curriculum. Nor do they all have high enough expectations of the quality of written work which they will accept from students; some is incomplete, lacking in detail and poorly presented. The teaching of mathematics does not always ensure that students have time to use their mathematical knowledge and understanding to solve real life problems.
- Marking and feedback are of variable quality. In some subjects, such as design technology and science, marking gives students guidance about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. However not all marking and feedback give students precise information about what they need to do to improve their work. Some comments are too general, such as 'practise more', rather than identifying the specific concepts and skills which students need to develop. Where marking is more focused students are not always given sufficient time to improve their work in response to teachers' guidance.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what students can achieve, particularly in Key Stage 3. They accept low-level and underdeveloped answers and do not challenge work that is of poor quality. They do not consistently use behaviour management systems and routines; consequently, learning in some lessons is not as rapid as it should be.
- Some teachers set work which meets the needs of students and engages them in their learning; when this happens, students respond well. For example, in a boys' physical education lesson the teacher taught movement and dance through the Haka, a traditional dance performed by the New Zealand rugby team, knowing that this would appeal to their interest in rugby. As a result, students made good progress. However, this is not consistent and when students are not interested in their work their attitudes to learning become more negative.
- Teaching assistants are generally used effectively to support the learning of disabled students and those with special educational needs both in lessons and in additional small group and individual work. As a result, those students make better progress than their peers.
- Some teachers use good questioning to probe and check on students' understanding. They have good subject knowledge and give students clear explanations and precise examples of what they are learning. In a business studies lesson, for example, the teacher showed a short clip of well-known people in business and their companies, and targeted questions to individual students. Their responses indicated that they enjoyed their learning and had acquired good skills and knowledge over time. However, this good practice is not consistently embedded, and some teachers miss opportunities to use questions to assess students' progress.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In the last three years the gap between the proportions of students who leave the academy with five good GCSEs including in English and mathematics and nationally has closed. In 2014, the academy maintained its

improvement at a time where the national picture was in decline. However, achievement is not good overall because there are gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged students and others, and not enough of the most able students make good progress across different subjects. Progress in Key Stage 3 is weaker than that in Key Stage 4.

- In 2014, the proportion of students who made expected progress in English was slightly above average; however, the proportion of students who made more than expected progress was below average.
- Students' literacy skills on entry to the academy are typically well below average and the number of students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding to accelerate their progress is increasing in the current Year 7. Those students have access to additional support programmes and evidence suggests that this is having a positive impact on improving their spelling and reading ages. It is too early yet to be clear about whether it is having an impact on their overall levels of attainment. Generally, students are given opportunities in English to write for a range of different purposes, including extended writing. However, teachers do not have consistently high expectation about the quality of writing they accept. Though students are given opportunities for extended writing in some other subjects across the curriculum, such as history, this is not consistent.
- In 2014, the proportion of students who made expected progress in mathematics was slightly above the national average, but the proportion that made more than expected progress was below average. Typically, students enter the academy with numeracy and basic calculation skills which are below average. Year 7 catch-up funding is being used to provide extra support for those who enter below Level 4, and there is evidence that this is having a positive impact on the attainment of those students. Teachers acknowledge that providing enough opportunities for students to apply their mathematical skills to solving real life problems is an area for development. Currently, students have plenty of opportunity to follow a process, but are not always sure of the key mathematical concepts which underpin it.
- In 2014 in English, disadvantaged students attained a grade and a half lower than others within school and nationally; in mathematics, the difference within school and nationally was two grades. Leaders acknowledge that the strategies which they used through the pupil premium in 2014 were not fully effective. In 2015, current data suggests that by the end of Year 11 the gap will close slightly in mathematics; however, in Key Stage 3 it is closing more rapidly.
- Progress across year groups and subjects is variable. Currently, progress at Key Stage 3, where more lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour, is slower than at Key Stage 4; and progress in English in Key Stage 3 is slower than progress in mathematics. However, tracking data indicate that progress begins to accelerate once students reach Year 10. With the return of the headteacher, there are now more rigorous systems in place for checking on progress at Key Stage 3 and supporting students who are underachieving.
- The achievement of the most able students overall requires improvement. In mathematics, for example, not enough students reach the higher levels of attainment. In Key Stage 3 some of the most able students are not making rapid enough progress in a number of subjects. This is because teachers do not consistently provide them with work which is challenging enough. In mathematics, for example, the students with the highest targets are not set more demanding work than others in lessons, but are invited to attend extra lessons in 'Period 6'. However, this is optional and not all attend, so they do not all have access to the subject knowledge they need to do well.
- The academy does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- The achievement of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is good. This is because they have access to extra support programmes, and the teachers who deliver these assess and monitor their impact closely, and take swift action with those who fall behind.
- The very few vulnerable students who attend an alternative learning provision are well catered for and achieve well.

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	Wakefield
Inspection number	442302

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	840
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan Pell
Headteacher	Gillian Metcalfe
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2012
Telephone number	01924 302560
Fax number	01924 302564
Email address	info@thefreestonacademy.com

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