

The Freeston Academy

Favell Avenue, Normanton, West Yorkshire WF6 1HZ

Inspection dates

1–2 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the school joined the Wakefield City Academies Trust in 2015, the trust has provided little support for senior leaders. This has meant that leaders have been limited in their planning for sustainable school improvement.
- Due to a period of significant turbulence, including staff changes, recruitment issues, staff absence and a fire at the school, leaders have been slower to have an impact on aspects of school improvement such as improving attendance for disadvantaged pupils.
- Aspirations for all young people are not consistently high enough across the school. This means that some pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, do not take pride in their work or push themselves to achieve good progress.
- The progress pupils make depends on the quality of teaching they receive. Where teaching is weak, progress and outcomes for all groups of pupils are weak.
- Teachers are not consistently using information about pupils' performance to plan pupils' learning and consequently some work does not challenge pupils to make good progress.
- Pupils are beginning to make use of feedback when teachers provide it. However, not all pupils respond and therefore the impact on progress is inconsistent.
- While behaviour has improved significantly since the last inspection, there is still work to do to improve attitudes to learning in key stage 4 and to eradicate low-level disruption.
- Provision for careers guidance is in place at key stage 4 but is limited at key stage 3. This means that not all pupils feel they have enough knowledge about choices they can make in their options and their future careers.
- Several key members of staff have left the school to work across the trust. This has left some positions unfilled in the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Safeguarding procedures and practices are strong. Training for school leaders and staff is highly effective and they have created a strong safeguarding culture in the school.
- The leaders have an accurate view of the school and staff respect them. Almost all staff say the school is well led and managed.
- The trust has provided effective support for middle leaders to develop the curriculum and their leadership and management skills, which has led to an improvement in systems and practices.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - the trust providing strategic influence and support for the senior leadership team, including the principal, to ensure that leaders improve and are in a stronger position to drive forward improvements in the school at a faster pace
 - rigorously monitoring and evaluating strategies for improvement, and taking decisive action when these strategies do not work or need further development.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - raising the aspirations of staff for all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities so that pupils make at least good progress and attitudes to learning improve
 - ensuring that all teachers take account of what pupils can already do when planning lessons so that challenge is appropriate and leads to stronger progress
 - regularly checking that staff adhere to the school's marking policy so that pupils improve their work as a result of teachers' feedback.
- Improve the quality of personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - driving up attendance so that groups of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, have better attendance which allows them to make at least good progress
 - continuing to develop and refine behaviour systems to reduce incidents of low-level disruption
 - developing the provision for careers guidance so that this starts earlier and supports pupils to make informed choices in key stage 3 about their options and their future careers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Significant turbulence has affected the rate at which leaders have improved the school. Some areas, such as pupils' behaviour, have moved on significantly since the last inspection due to leaders implementing an effective behaviour system. However, other areas such as attendance and the quality of teaching and learning have not improved as much.
- The Wakefield City Academies Trust is providing support at middle-leadership level through school improvement partners. This has helped to raise the profile of middle leaders, increase expectations of their role and improve quality assurance. However, there has been little support at senior leadership level, which means operational, rather than strategic and sustained, improvements have been a priority.
- Leaders have ensured that a programme for social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is part of the curriculum. Through this, pupils learn about British values. The quality of this varies across the school and consequently not all pupils develop all the skills they need for life in modern Britain.
- School leaders do not evaluate all of the strategies for improvement that they implement. For example, where staff have received training in teaching pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the impact of this training has not been checked so leaders do not know if pupils are making better progress as a result of the training.
- Attendance has not been a high enough priority in the last academic year and consequently rates of attendance have decreased.
- School leaders set performance management targets that are robust, in line with school priorities. For example, this year, all staff have a target to improve pupils' progress. It is too soon to see whether this has had an impact.
- Results from the staff survey show overwhelming support for leaders and managers. Staff feel that the school is improving and that leaders support them well in their roles.
- Leaders have ensured that additional funding for pupils who need to catch up with English and mathematics is spent well. This has led to improvements in numeracy and literacy for almost all pupils involved. In contrast, additional funding for those who are disadvantaged did not have sufficient impact last year.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is appropriate for pupils of all abilities. They have widened access to the English Baccalaureate and they have put additional time into the curriculum to develop literacy and numeracy skills. They have also streamlined provision in languages to address recruitment issues and previous underperformance. The school now offers Spanish only and the number of pupils choosing to study it is increasing.

Governance

- Governors have a good understanding of the progress that their school is making. Through access to current information, governors challenge school leaders and the trust to support and direct areas for school improvement.
- Governors know how school leaders spend additional funding and they check the impact that this is having on pupils. Where it has not had the desired impact, governors are knowledgeable about why and they challenge school leaders to improve.
- Through effective training, governors are confident in their roles. They are passionate about the journey the school is taking and have a determination to ensure high standards for all pupils.
- The trust has recently restructured and is now in a stronger position to support school improvement at a strategic level.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders ensure that they meet all statutory requirements and they conduct the appropriate checks on all new staff, visitors and contractors.
- All staff receive regular training on child protection and safeguarding, and they know the importance of their role in keeping children safe. They are able to explain how they would identify children at risk and how they would report their concerns.
- The school works effectively with other agencies including the police and mental health services. This helps to support vulnerable pupils and keep them in school.
- School leaders and staff are knowledgeable about issues in the local community and they work with pupils to help them understand risks and identify strategies to keep themselves safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school. Where there is evidence of strong practice, pupils' progress is strong. Where there is weaker teaching practice, pupils' progress is poor.
- Not all time in lessons is used productively. Some time is wasted when pupils are not given enough work to do or when the work is too easy for them. As a result, pupils do not make good progress.
- In some lessons, teachers ask skilful and targeted questions that support pupils to move on in their learning, but in some lessons questioning is too superficial and teachers accept answers that do not deepen learning.
- The majority of teachers give pupils feedback in line with the school's policy. However, not all pupils respond to the feedback and so it is not contributing to their progress. Those pupils who are responding are developing the capacity to learn from their mistakes.
- The quality of work in pupils' books is an improving picture since the last inspection. However, there is still work to do to ensure that pupils take more pride in their work and take care with their presentation.

- Pupils who have been absent from school do not always have a plan for how they will catch up on the work they have missed. Consequently, in some books there are gaps where work is missing. This limits the progress that pupils can make.
- Teachers now have access to regular information and data about pupils' performance. This is allowing teachers to plan appropriate activities according to the ability of pupils and to support pupils who have fallen behind. However, not all teachers use this information well.
- Teachers have ensured that there are increased opportunities for extended writing in their subjects. Where teaching is strong, this work supports pupils to develop their writing and spelling skills.
- In art, a teacher very effectively used the previous work of other pupils to excite and enthuse pupils. The teacher used this opportunity to motivate pupils and raise their interest in art. As a result, pupils worked hard and were keen to do their best.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- School leaders and staff work hard to deal with any incidents of bullying and the number of incidents and repeat incidents are decreasing. However, pupils' perceptions of bullying differ across the school and while the majority of pupils feel that teachers deal with bullying well, a significant number of pupils feel that this is not the case.
- Careers advice is not informing pupils early enough in key stage 3 about the range of options available to them when they leave school. Pupils say they would like more information before they take their options in Year 9 so that they can make the right choices for their futures.
- Pupils say that they are encouraged to respect differences. They are positive about their school community and are proud to be part of it. They said, 'It is ok to be different.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils, staff and parents agree that behaviour has improved since the last inspection when it was inadequate. This is due to effective policies that teachers apply consistently. Most pupils say they know what they should and should not do. However, some pupils still cause disruption in lessons.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently positive. In key stage 4, some pupils stop others from learning due to low-level disruption and silly behaviour. Attitudes to learning in key stage 3 are more positive and pupils are keen to do well.
- The numbers of exclusions were higher than national averages last year for all groups of pupils. This is due to the higher expectations that school leaders and staff now have for behaviour. Internal data for this academic year indicates that the number of exclusions is now reducing.

- Pupils who breach school rules spend time in internal exclusion. In the internal exclusion room, expectations are high and pupils complete the same work as their peers so that they do not fall behind. The number of pupils accessing the inclusion room is decreasing.
- Pupils attending alternative provision behave well because they are very focused and this allows them to make better progress than when they were attending school full time.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Progress in different subjects is too variable to ensure that pupils make good progress in all subjects over time. Pupils' performance information over time shows that in some subjects disadvantaged pupils and others make similar progress, and in other subjects they do not. It also shows that in some subjects progress is strong for all groups of pupils and in others it is poor for all groups of pupils.
- The impact of additional funding for Year 11 disadvantaged pupils in the academic year 2015/16 was limited and did not produce the desired outcomes for all pupils in this group. Plans for this academic year show that interventions have been refined and the quality improved.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress at a similar rate to their peers. Pupils who are most able do not all make the progress of which they are capable.
- Disadvantaged pupils make more progress in mathematics than they do in English. The amount of progress pupils are making in mathematics is increasing throughout the school, showing the impact of the strategies put in place to improve teaching.
- Some pupils make above-expected progress in subjects such as art, BTEC business, food, textiles, music, biology, chemistry and physics.
- Pupils read well and, when they are stuck, they use appropriate strategies to sound out words. Pupils read widely and often, and can talk about the styles of books they like and the books they are currently reading. However, due to the fire in August 2015, when the library was destroyed, pupils report that they have limited access to books in school. This is having an impact on the development of reading skills for pupils in Year 7, particularly those who do not have books at home.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision remain in education and achieve some results at GCSE level. Their biggest successes are in gaining places in college where they continue to develop their skills.
- Destination data is an improving picture and above the national average. This is because during key stage 4 pupils have good careers advice and guidance including one-to-one interviews with a careers adviser, visits to a range of different colleges, visits from different employers, information about apprenticeships and a careers fair. Almost all pupils enter employment, education or training.

School details

Unique reference number	137655
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10011688

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	743
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr G Bishop
Principal	Mr M Tarr
Telephone number	01924 302 560
Website	www.thefreestonacademy.com
Email address	info@thefreestonacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	7–8 January 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The Freeston Academy is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported with an education, health and care plan is just above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for special educational needs support is below the national average.

- The school has three pupils who access alternative provision from The Lighthouse Group and three pupils attending Wakefield College full time. Five Year 11 pupils access college once per fortnight as part of an early-access programme with Wakefield College.
- In 2015, the school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school joined the Wakefield City Academies Trust in September 2015.
- The principal took up a permanent post in April 2016, following a significant period of turbulence at the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 part-lessons across a range of subjects, in all year groups. Two observations of learning were carried out jointly with the deputy principal and a learning walk was carried out jointly with the principal. Inspectors listened to pupils read, including the most able pupils.
- Meetings and discussions were held with pupils, teachers, middle leaders, senior leaders, the principal and governors, including the chair of the governing body and a representative from the Wakefield City Academies Trust.
- Inspectors took account of 12 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, 52 responses to the staff questionnaire, and 52 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documentation including the school’s self-evaluation, improvement plans, records relating to pupils’ behaviour and attendance, the school’s own information and data relating to pupils’ achievement and the quality of teaching, the school’s website and policies, and minutes from governors’ meetings.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records and associated policies and procedures including checks on the suitability of staff.

Inspection team

Debbie Redshaw, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Rebekah Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Cleary	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Clark	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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