

Frewen College

Independent School

Inspection report

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| DCSF Registration Number | 845/6002 |
| Unique Reference Number | 114635 |
| URN for social care | SC049345 |
| Inspection number | 329569 |
| Inspection dates | 10–11 March 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Anne Duffy HMI |
| Social care inspector | Paul Taylor |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended. The inspection of boarding was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.

Information about the school

Frewen College is a day and residential specialist school administered through the Frewen Educational Trust Ltd. It is registered with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) for up to 144 pupils aged 5 to 17 who have specific learning difficulties and/or difficulties related to Asperger's syndrome. It is also a registered member of the Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Pupils. Approximately half of the pupils are privately funded, and half funded by their local authority. At the time of the inspection 17 local authorities had pupils placed at the school. The large majority of pupils have statements of special educational needs. The junior department is located nearby at The Oaks, a purpose-built teaching base. This was approved in 1998 and is registered for up to 26 pupils. The school, which is situated in a rural location in East Sussex on a 60 acre site, opened in 1957. In September 2004 it began to admit girls to the school and there are currently 90 pupils on roll, of whom 11 are girls. The school is registered for 89 boarders and residential accommodation is on the site. Currently there are 28 pupils who board during the week. At present, boarding is only available for boys and the school is seeking registration to provide boarding for girls.

The Principal has been in post since September 2006.

Evaluation of the school

Frewen College provides a good quality of education and satisfactory provision for boarding. Curricular provision is good and appropriate plans are in place to extend it further. Pupils are well motivated and make good progress. As one pupil said, 'You don't realise how much it helps you until you look back and think'. Teaching and assessment are good overall. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good as is their behaviour. The school's ethos is supported by generally good relationships between staff and pupils. Procedures for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of pupils are satisfactory. Since the last inspection of its education provision the school has addressed all but one of the previously unmet regulations; since its last inspection of boarding it has met all but one of the required National Minimum Standards.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good with some outstanding features. It is broad and balanced and responsive to the needs of an increasingly complex pupil population. Attention to the individual needs of pupils permeates the school curriculum and the school is rightly identifying ways in which it can offer a broader range of accreditation to reflect this.

Primary school pupils are provided with a strong foundation for learning through a curriculum which provides a good balance between key skills and topic based work. Pupils' interests are engaged and they respond particularly well to the opportunities to take charge of their own learning, for example through the creation of video clips that will go onto the school web-site. Senior school pupils are prepared well for GCSE and entry level courses. They also benefit from excellent opportunities to develop a broad range of skills, for example through the Duke of Edinburgh programme and the Active Kids Get Cooking Scheme. The school makes outstanding provision for pupils to develop information and communication technology skills. The strong focus upon the development of literacy and numeracy skills is apparent in the whole school approach to the daily sessions which are well delivered and are being closely evaluated. There is good provision for sport. Some girls, however, would like more activities which are tailored to their needs and interests. The school has appropriate plans to further improve provision in order to meet the needs and interests of the full range of its pupils.

Outstanding curricular enrichment includes both sporting and creative elements. These provide pupils with well-chosen opportunities to test their resilience and ability to work with others. They include the 'woodland school' for the older primary pupils, maths activity day, which involves the whole secondary department, and the Easter Fun Run which involves staff and pupils.

The quality of teaching is good and this is recognised by the pupils. As one complimented, 'the teachers are an asset to the school'. Teachers plan and organise lesson activities well and work in close partnership with teaching assistants to meet individual pupils' needs effectively. Good subject knowledge is supported well by additional training in the specialist skills required. This is provided for all staff both in-house and through other professional development opportunities. The school's own therapists provide effective support both in and out of lessons so that learning and access needs are consistently met. In the best lessons students are actively involved in their learning, respond very well to teachers' skilful use of questioning and are increasingly independent in their learning. In some lessons however, planning to challenge higher attaining pupils is not always evident. However, expectations are generally high and pupils rise to these.

Many pupils make rapid progress when they join the school. This is a positive response to their needs being met, with consequent impact upon their confidence and attitude to learning. They make good progress overall so that by the end of their time at the college they have gained up to eight GCSEs with grades ranging from C to G. Some pupils gain higher grades in particular subjects including design and technology (DT), drama and music. Some also achieve level 2 or 3 at entry level English and mathematics. Pupils particularly appreciate the progress they have been able to make in reading. As one boy said, 'When I came here, I thought I'd never read. Now I read really thick books!'

Thorough baseline and continuing assessments support effective tracking of pupils' progress. Recent analysis confirms the school's view that those who join the school at an early stage make the most progress overall. Clear learning targets are in place and even the youngest pupils are motivated to achieve them.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. The outstanding extra-curricular provision, combined with good teaching and good opportunities in boarding, encourage pupils to attend well and enjoy their time at Frewen. There is a strong sense of community involvement. Pupils participate in organising activities such as those connected with Red Nose Day and even the youngest pupils are committed to environmental projects, such as raising money to support conservation on the Galapagos Islands.

Through a good range of outside speakers and visits pupils are helped to understand the types and roles of public services and institutions in England. Despite good provision to raise awareness of other countries and lifestyles, pupils are less secure in their knowledge of different cultures and backgrounds. However, they benefit from a wide range of rich cultural experiences which include going to the opera, theatre and art galleries. Good and growing links are made with neighbouring schools and the local community.

Good careers guidance and individualised life skill programmes, supported effectively by therapy input, prepare the pupils well for their future lives. As a result the school has a very strong track record of pupils moving on to further education, employment or training.

Although for some, social interaction is not easy, behaviour is good overall because pupils are helped to understand both their own and others' needs. They are supported in this by the thoughtfully delivered mentoring provision for which there is growing take-up. Pupils help to evaluate its effectiveness, saying for example, 'it taught me to be myself and helped me to make friends'.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory; in school it is good. However, in boarding, some key standards are unmet. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to safeguard students' safety and welfare. Staff undergo regular training to keep up to date with child protection matters. There are a small number of bullying incidents for which the school has robust procedures. Staff are aware of how to deal with incidents properly although there is some inconsistency in recording. Pupils appear happy and open in their relationships with each other and with staff. Although a small minority of parents expressed concern about the approachability of staff, pupils are generally confident to talk to staff if they encounter problems. The quality of supervision is good and pupils feel safe. Pupils are regularly taught about and therefore have a sound knowledge of internet safety. Pupils' welfare is regularly monitored, and the school is appropriately working towards strengthening its provision for girls. The needs of pupils with Asperger's syndrome are met well because of the school's strong focus on meeting individual needs.

The school has recently received the Sportsmark award. There are ample opportunities for pupils to take part in outdoor exercise, such as orienteering and camping in the extensive grounds. Indoor exercise is well catered for with a fitness centre and access to a sports hall. Excellent catering provides pupils with a healthy and balanced diet. Pupils demonstrate awareness of other aspects of healthy living, including responsible attitudes to sex, drinking and drugs. Health education is supported by well-targeted contributions from the school nurse.

Fire procedures and risk assessments for educational visits are implemented well. First aid policies and procedures meet the regulations; the school makes good use of its modernised medical centre. Admission and attendance registers are correctly kept except for one minor omission on the admission register.

The school has developed an audit of accessibility and plan which complies with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The vast majority of the regulations are met. However, recently a member of the residential staff started employment before receipt of a criminal records bureau check. Although arrangements were made to ensure that this member of staff did not work unattended with children, this contravenes one of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools.

School's premises and accommodation

The vast majority of the regulations for the premises and accommodation are met. However, the ventilation in the DT room is still inadequate for some of the materials being used there; guidance in the policy does not make it clear when masks must be worn.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides comprehensive information on its web-site and there is an informative prospectus although this does not currently specify the range of needs for which the school is now registered. The reporting system and annual reviews for all pupils help parents, carers and local authorities to be well informed about pupils' progress.

Procedures for handling complaints

Procedures for dealing with complaints are available and compliant with regulations, although a few parents were unclear about them.

Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The quality of boarding at Frewen College is satisfactory and most of the key National Minimum Standards are met. One outcome area is outstanding, three areas are judged as good and two are satisfactory. Some key standards are not met. Records of restraints in the book kept for this purpose do not contain all the details required by National Minimum Standards. Sanctions imposed are not always recorded in the sanctions record. One member of the boarding staff commenced employment without a Criminal Records Bureau check or references. However this staff member was supervised until the necessary checks were received. The health care plans do not clearly outline the care pupils may require to meet specific health needs.

Five of the six recommendations made at the last inspection have been addressed. These include improving the recording of complaints by pupils, ensuring fire records are signed by the author, regular minuted supervision of boarding staff, recording how pupils' personal targets are achieved and ensuring that the call bell in the sick bay works.

The catering facility at the school is excellent, enabling the young people to enjoy a healthy balanced diet that meets their needs and choices. There is very good liaison between various healthcare professionals to support the staff in meeting the young people's health and emotional needs. A well organised medical centre provides facilities for the pupils to receive medical treatment. The school nurse has introduced very good medication procedures and First Aid is well managed.

Staff follow child protection procedures when necessary and record liaison with other agencies very well. The Principal is the named person for child protection in the school. The Principal and head of boarding provide training and guidance for all staff in child protection. Pupils know who they can complain to and records kept of their complaints and comments are good. Pupils have numerous opportunities to share their views in formal arenas such as the school council and boarding meetings as well as informally with a variety of staff members. An example of an improvement in boarding influenced by pupils was the purchase of a large flat screen television.

Activities offered to the pupils are varied and give them an opportunity to expand their life experience. The excellent choice and clear structure of activities means that pupils find boarding both interesting and enjoyable.

Interaction between boarders and staff is relaxed and warm. The small size of the boarding community means that members of staff are very aware of each pupil's needs. Pastoral support and care is of a very high standard. If bullying occurs the pupils are very clear that the staff will deal with it and offer support to the victim and advice to the perpetrator. Pupils feel that sanctions are given fairly and that they are also encouraged and rewarded for behaving well.

Accommodation in the school is comfortable and clean. Pupils are able to personalise their rooms with pictures and posters. Pupils' privacy is protected and the staff have clear guidelines in place with regards to respecting their privacy. The school's grounds are extensive and have numerous facilities including a swimming pool, park land, football pitch and all weather play surface. Pupils are able to contact their families and friends via mobile telephones, e-mail and the school's telephone. Most go home at weekends.

The school has regularly reviewed risk assessments which ensure that pupils' safety is protected and promoted both during activities and on the premises. Fire drills, checks of fire equipment and other safety checks are carried out regularly. A clear policy is in place for the staff to follow in the event that a pupil is missing. Records show that this is effectively followed if needed.

Levels of staffing are good and the pupils report that they have easy access to advice and support. New staff undergo an induction process which includes child protection training and familiarisation with boarding routines. Examples of other training received include first aid and training in the use of an 'epipen.'

The school ensures that pupils receive very good support from professionals within the school's staff and experts available from outside the school such as psychologists and psychiatrists.

The school's written prospectus does not make clear the change in registration which occurred in 2006, of the types of special education need for which the school is registered. Records kept within boarding and key records such as sanctions and restraints are regularly checked by senior members of staff, however, details missing from restraints records and inconsistency of recording of sanctions means that the overall category achieved in the area of organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Pupils' individuality is clearly understood and excellent support is offered to meet their idiosyncratic needs. Numerous opportunities are offered to the pupils to enjoy cultural activities and to celebrate differences between religions, races and cultures.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ("the Regulations"), with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to confirmation of appointment ensure that criminal records bureau checks have been completed before residential staff take up their duties (paragraph 4(2)(e)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- improve ventilation in rooms where pupils work with hazardous dust materials (paragraph 5(p)).

In order to meet the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools and associated regulations, the school must:

- ensure that health care plans contain written information on how each pupil's specific health needs will be met. (NMS 14)
- ensure that the record of restraints includes all the details required by the National Minimum Standards. (NMS 10)
- ensure that all sanctions imposed are recorded in the sanctions book. (NMS 10)

- ensure that all necessary checks are carried out on staff before they commence employment. (NMS 10)
- ensure that the written prospectus contains information which outlines the type of special educational needs for which the school is registered. (NMS 1)

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- evaluate the impact of the opportunities provided for pupils to learn about and experience cultures other than their own
- as the ratio of girls to boys increases, ensure that curriculum development is sensitive to the needs of girls

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

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|-------------|------|--------------|------------|
| outstanding | good | satisfactory | inadequate |
|-------------|------|--------------|------------|

The quality of education

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Overall quality of education | | ✓ | | |
| How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils | | ✓ | | |
| How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs | | ✓ | | |
| How well pupils make progress in their learning | | ✓ | | |

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | | ✓ | | |
| The behaviour of pupils | | ✓ | | |

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils | | | ✓ | |
|--|--|--|---|--|

The quality of boarding provision *(leave blank if not applicable)*

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|----------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Evaluation of boarding provision | | | ✓ | |
|----------------------------------|--|--|---|--|

School details

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| Name of school | Frewen College | | |
| DCSF number | 845/6002 | | |
| Unique reference number | 114635 | | |
| Type of school | Special | | |
| Status | Independent | | |
| Date school opened | 1957 | | |
| Age range of pupils | 6–16 | | |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | | |
| Number on roll (full-time pupils) | Boys: 79 | Girls: 11 | Total: 90 |
| Number of boarders | Boys: 28 | Girls: 0 | Total: 28 |
| Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need | Boys: 54 | Girls: 6 | Total: 60 |
| Number of pupils who are looked after | Boys: 0 | Girls: 0 | Total: 0 |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £18,2225 | | |
| Annual fees (boarders) | £25,575 | | |
| Address of school | Northiam Rye East Sussex TN31 6NL | | |
| Telephone number | 01797252494 | | |
| Fax number | 01797252567 | | |
| Email address | office@frewencollege.co.uk | | |
| Headteacher | Mrs Linda Smith | | |
| Proprietor | Frewen Educational Trust Ltd | | |
| Reporting inspector | Anne Duffy HMI | | |
| Dates of inspection | 10–11 March 2009 | | |