

Frederick Bremer School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103094
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	333038
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	907
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Malcolm Howard
Headteacher	Ms Ruth Woodward
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Siddeley Road Walthamstow London E17 4EY
Telephone number	020 8498 3340
Fax number	020 8523 5323

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of average size and was established in September 2008 as a result of the amalgamation of Aveling Park School and Warwick Boys School. It has been designated as a specialist engineering college. Well over three quarters of the students come from minority ethnic backgrounds and over a half have English as an additional language. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is higher than usually found. The proportion of students identified with specific, moderate and behavioural difficulties is well above average. The school has gained a number of awards including the Healthy School Award and Sportsmark.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Frederick Bremer is a good and rapidly improving school. The outstanding work of the headteacher and her senior team has ensured that a seamless transition took place when the two separate former secondary schools were amalgamated in September 2008. They quickly got to grips with the creation of a successful new secondary school which got off to a flying start. This has been a key feature to the success of the present school which has not experienced the national trend towards underachievement during amalgamation. Students say, 'We no longer feel we are coming from two different schools.' The majority of parents show confidence in the school and one wrote, 'The school has done well to bring two schools together and continue to offer a good education.' The headteacher's remarkable track record at one of the schools prior to amalgamation, combined with an extremely effective senior management team, ensures that capacity for further improvement is excellent. Some elements of its work are already outstanding.

A great deal of good and effective work, particularly outside the classroom, has been done to ensure that vulnerable students, those with specific, moderate, behavioural and emotional needs, and those students with English as an additional language are cared for, protected and supported very well. The result of this work is that the vast majority of students make good progress in their learning and that standards are rising steadily. Overall, standards are broadly average but considering their starting points, students' achievement is good and sometimes excellent. The currently good teaching is being developed further through systematic and rigorous monitoring. Through this, leaders are already aware of some issues in mathematics teaching and plans are being put in place to tackle these. Overall good teaching in class combines with excellent tracking and good support for any students whose progress might be in danger of slowing. Teachers' marking and feedback is generally effective and helps students improve their work, but some examples of scant marking were seen during the inspection.

The school's specialist status as an engineering college is used effectively to create links across the good curriculum. For example, during engineering week, technology, humanities and art contributed to ten exciting activities including bridge-building and three-dimensional kinetic art. The specialist status also ensures that appropriate visitors to the school encourage girls to consider a career in engineering. This has a good impact on their confidence and self-esteem. Links with a variety of organisations and businesses are outstanding and testament to the commitment of the school in providing the best possible experiences for learners. The partnerships with other schools in the local area have been particularly effective in providing staff with highly effective continuing professional development. In addition, gifted and talented students have been provided with excellent opportunities to work effectively with other students in schools nearby.

The school ensures that personal, social and health education keep learners safe and well informed about contemporary issues affecting the lives of many young people. Students are able to seek on site help and counselling. This demonstrates the school's proactive approach to supporting learners' personal development and well-being. Students are able to extend their enterprise and financial skills because the school has developed an extensive network of partnership links with local businesses and institutions. Work with some groups of parents has also been highly effective, although there is a small minority of parents whose perceptions of the school's work are less positive. The school is working hard to overcome these through improving communications.

The strategies used to promote community cohesion in the school are excellent and have a strong impact on the local community in particular. The school contributed evidence towards the borough's application for Beacon status in this area. Frederick Bremer engages schools across the globe and has achieved 'International Schools Status'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching and learning is consistently good, particularly in mathematics, so that standards rise.
- Ensure that marking and feedback to students is consistently good across all departments in order to support learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 show that the majority of students join the school with standards which are below average, and sometimes exceptionally low. Tracking shows that good progress is made across all year groups, so that they make up ground by the end of Year 11 from their starting points. The systems for tracking students are robust and have proved consistently accurate in the past. The school sets highly challenging targets which have yet to be missed. The current data show that students are set to attain results at GCSE that are broadly in line with national averages from previous years. This is also the case when English and mathematics are included. This constitutes good progress for students, and some make exceptional progress, because of effective mentoring and focused learning opportunities.

In most lessons and work seen students also make good progress. Those with moderate or specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and also make good progress. The school has been concerned about the standards reached by some girls, particularly in Year 10, and have monitored this closely, providing support to ensure they now make the progress they should. Students who are vulnerable to exclusion are very well supported to keep them engaged and, where appropriate, alternative provision ensures that they continue to engage with learning and make the progress they are capable of. There is considerable analysis of data which shows that the wide range of ethnic groups performs similarly and there is no underachievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy coming to school and their attendance is good. One student commented that being at the school 'is a dream come true for me'. Students behave well in class and around the school, and relationships are good at all levels. Students have settled well into the new school, and say that those from the two different schools have quickly made friends with one another. Thanks to the hard work of the school and excellent management of the amalgamation, the student community is a harmonious and sociable group. Individuals from a range of different backgrounds respect one another and feel valued. Those students who have difficulty behaving well receive good support from the school, so that they do not disrupt the learning of others and are able to make progress themselves.

Students have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. They make healthy choices at mealtimes and are keen to take part in sport. Most have a sensible approach to taking care of themselves and keeping safe, though a few do not always think through the consequences of their actions. Students make the most of the opportunities they have to take on responsibility and make a contribution to the school and wider community. They are happy to act as prefects or librarians, for example, or to prepare food for the breakfast club in the Learning Support Unit. Others write regularly for the local paper or visit local primary schools to coach sport. Students are well prepared for the future. They develop good life skills and achieve average standards from well below and low starting points by the time they leave.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students make good progress overall because of good teaching. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and engage students so that they are attentive in class and learn well. On the whole, teachers plan their lessons well to cater for students of varying abilities. They set out clearly what students will learn in the lesson, and lively starter activities are a strong feature of the best teaching. At the end of lessons students discuss what new ideas and skills they have learnt and successfully evaluate the quality of their own learning. Best teaching challenges students to think for themselves and work independently to produce work of high quality. It ensures that the pace of learning is brisk and teachers use well-targeted questioning to ensure that students learn well. Where teaching is less effective, for example in mathematics, the pace of learning is slower with fewer opportunities for students to learn for themselves. The school recognises that teaching in some departments is stronger than in others and is monitoring it rigorously and taking action to ensure greater consistency.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum offers students of all abilities a good grounding in the core skills, enabling them to make good progress. It provides them with excellent opportunities to extend their learning through a rich programme of trips, visits and clubs of all kinds, including academic, sports and arts activities. Students are encouraged to work independently. Year 7 students, for example, take responsibility for their own learning by working on cross-curricular projects. However, the school recognises that its aim of creating further cross-curricular links, apart from in special themed weeks, is not fully developed, and plans are in hand to extend them. Students in Years 10 and 11 have a wide choice of academic and vocational courses, and nearly all study the options that most appeal to them. Those who wish to undertake work-related learning have good opportunities to study a range of technological and vocational courses, including construction. The school's specialist status as an engineering college is used effectively to develop links between such subjects across the curriculum, such as technology and art, and to encourage girls to take up engineering as a career. The school works effectively to raise students' aspirations. Students are inspired to aim for higher education through an effective programme of visits to colleges and universities. All students are well prepared for the next stage of their careers through an effective work experience programme and through good partnerships with businesses and industry.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for students are good. Students are well cared for on a daily basis and staff are attentive to the needs of individuals. One parent commented, 'My son has become a very nice young man thanks to the support and guidance from many teachers.' The Learning Support unit does a very effective job in meeting the many different and complex needs of those students who find school difficult for whatever reason, so that they are able to learn as well as they can. There is good provision for students with behavioural difficulties and specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for those who are new to learning English, and this means that they are able to make progress at a similar rate to their classmates. Procedures for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.

Academic guidance for students is good. The student tracking and intervention leaders chart students' progress carefully, so that additional support can be effectively targeted and high achievers identified and challenged. Students receive good guidance on how well they are performing and what level they have reached. There are some good examples of teachers' marking and feedback, particularly in the humanities department, and this means that students understand clearly what they need to do to improve and reach higher levels. However, this best practice is not consistent across all departments in the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are inspirational. The tireless work and enthusiasm of the headteacher, working with a dedicated and highly talented senior leadership team, has created a thriving, purposeful school with achievement and care at its heart. Leaders at all levels are clear and decisive about what they need to do to improve. This is because school development planning is exemplary. Rigorous self-evaluation and monitoring have ensured a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses with appropriate timely interventions to tackle underachievement. These have ensured that equality of opportunity is at the top of the school's agenda and discrimination is tackled effectively. All staff share a vision of high achievement for all. Leaders analyse school information carefully to identify and target extra support for any underachieving students. As a result, new programmes are set up to raise achievement which have had excellent impact, for example among girls in Year 10. Governance is excellent. Governors both challenge and support the school, are well informed and are willing to make difficult decisions. Their involvement in the new school building programme, and extensive knowledge of the local community, ensures that the school serves its diverse population well.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

25 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Frederick Bremer School, London, E17 4EY

It was a great pleasure to meet you during our recent visit to your school. Your behaviour in and around school is good. You have good relationships with your teachers. You listen to them and cooperate very well with them and with each other. This helps you to make good progress. We decided, after observing lessons, looking at your work, and talking to your teachers, that your school provides you with a good quality of education. You can be proud of it! Your headteacher and her senior team have done an excellent job combining your two old schools. They work hard to ensure that your results are rising and that the school moves ever onward. It is rapidly improving.

We saw lots of good teaching. The staff provide you with extra help in sessions outside class, and this ensures that your achievement is good. Your teachers work very hard to make sure that their lessons are interesting. They are seeking to make improvements all the time. Some lessons are better than others, though, and we have said that teachers in all subjects should try and make sure that you all make as much progress as possible in your lessons, especially in mathematics. Also, although many teachers mark your work regularly and write comments to help you improve it, this does not always happen. We have asked that your headteacher checks that this improves.

You make a very good contribution to the community. We feel your school is preparing you well for the world of work and for your responsibilities as global citizens.

Thank you, again, for all the help you gave us during the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Lead Inspector