

Freemantles School

Smarts Heath Road, Mayford Green, Woking, GU22 0AN

Inspection dates 8–9 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well, and often very well, in overcoming many of the difficulties they face related to their autism. For example, pupils make very good progress in learning to mix with other people in and out of school.
- Much of the teaching in the school is good, with some examples of outstanding teaching practice. The teaching, and as a result the progress, of the youngest children in the school is outstanding.
- Staff do well in supporting pupils to improve their ability to communicate. Many learn to put forward their views through adopting specialist strategies, such as using symbols to represent words.
- The sixth form is good. Students take part in a wide range of activities both in school and at a local college. They have good opportunities to learn practical skills.
- Pupils, across the school, usually show a good attitude to learning and feel safe in school. Those pupils, whose autism can result in behaviour that at times is anti-social, are often successfully helped to learn to behave in more socially appropriate ways.
- The headteacher, with good support from governors, has shown real determination in ensuring that the quality of teaching is highly effective in addressing the particular needs of pupils on the autistic spectrum.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons teachers, particularly in the secondary part of the school, do not always give enough consideration as to how pupils' reading, writing and number skills can be improved even further.
- On some occasions teachers do not use what pupils have achieved in previous lessons in the planning of their lessons.
- The school is not clear as to how homework might be used appropriately. Some parents and carers are concerned or unsure about the use of homework.
- Not all senior leaders rigorously check on the progress of pupils or the subjects they manage.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 12 lessons and undertook two 'learning walks' where they sampled teaching and learning in a number of classes, including three in the sixth form.
- They held meetings with pupils and members of staff. Meetings were also held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work, teachers' lesson plans, listened to pupils read and reviewed achievement data showing pupils' progress.
- School policies were sampled and the minutes of recent governing body meetings reviewed.
- The inspectors took account of 50 parents' and carers' comments on the online Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Charles Hackett, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Barbara Firth	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Freemantles School caters for pupils who are on the autistic spectrum. Many have difficulties with speech and language. A minority of pupils are recognised as having 'challenging' behaviour.
- A below average number of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and in the care of the local authority and as a result eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium.
- A lower than average number of pupils come from minority ethnic groups.
- Students in the sixth form attend Brooklands further education college for one day each week.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- During the current academic year improve the quality of teaching, particularly in the secondary part of the school, further by:
 - all teachers ensuring there is sufficient focus on how pupils can improve their reading, writing and number skills in their lessons
 - all teachers always giving consideration to what pupils have achieved previously in the planning of their lessons
 - working closely with parents and carers to consider how homework can be best used to support the learning of pupils
- Over the next term increase the involvement of all senior leaders in the rigorous checking of pupils' progress and all aspects of the performance of the staff they manage.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils often make excellent progress in increasing their ability to participate fully in learning. For example, in a specialist 'attention autism' lesson, younger pupils were able to stay fully focused on the actions of the teacher and followed instructions very carefully.
- Pupils are often very successful in achieving their individual improvement targets, which are linked to different characteristics associated with being on the autistic spectrum. Because these targets are individual and designed to stretch pupils, their achievement demonstrates good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- Pupils learn to express themselves well, either verbally or through the use of symbols. Many become increasingly independent in being able to collect their resources and follow the expected routines of the classroom. They progress well in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Progress slows in a few lessons when teachers do not give enough consideration to what pupils have learnt and achieved in previous lessons.
- The youngest children in the school, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, make excellent progress. They respond very well to the structure and expectation of the classroom and learn to relate very well to each other.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress. They extend their skills and confidence in working in different situations. For example, they work very well in caring for the school animals and in preparing food for a staff cafe they run every Friday.
- Although in lessons pupils make particularly good progress in improving their communication skills this is not always the same for their reading, writing and use of number. This is because, in a few lessons, it is not always evident how teachers are supporting pupils' development of skills in these aspects.
- The school has a good set of data to compare pupils' progress against national achievement information. This shows that, from their individual starting points, pupils often make good or better progress in English and mathematics.
- All groups of pupils in the school, including those with speech and language difficulties, those with 'challenging' behaviour and those who receive additional funding through the pupil premium make similar good rates of progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is usually good and within the school there are examples of outstanding teaching practice. This includes, within the Early Years Foundation Stage, where the use of specialist strategies to support children on the autistic spectrum are particularly effective.
- Teachers rightly regard it as very important to develop pupils' communication skills. They use specialist strategies, such as the use of symbols, very effectively. Very good use is made of interactive whiteboards to communicate information to pupils.
- Teachers and support assistants have very good relationships with pupils. They use these very well, alongside specialist techniques, to manage those pupils with behavioural problems associated with their autism in a very skilful manner. This often means that potentially difficult situations are quickly resolved.
- In a few lessons, teaching is less effective because insufficient attention in planning the activities of the lesson has been given to what pupils have achieved previously. This can lead to pupils repeating work and some of the higher ability pupils not being sufficiently stretched by the work.
- Teaching assistants are very supportive. They work effectively both within the classroom alongside the teacher and also when supporting individual pupils, who can find it too difficult to always be in a classroom setting. They are particularly skilful at interpreting the actions of pupils

to know when it is appropriate to offer support or when pupils need time on their own before being ready to take part in an activity. Just occasionally, assistants are sometimes less effective in lessons involving computers because their own skills are limited.

- On occasions, more so in the secondary part of the school, teachers do not always use the activities of the lesson as well as they might to help pupils improve their reading, writing and number skills.
- Homework is not normally set by staff and while this may be appropriate the school has not communicated this clearly to parents and carers and given reasons for this decision.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in the school, over time, is usually good. This means that pupils are able to engage safely in a range of activities both in and out of class. This shows the very good progress pupils often make with their moral and social development.
- There are good systems to support each individual student behave in an appropriate manner in a variety of situations. Where required, staff provide good levels of supervision. Even in these situations, though, there is a strong focus from all staff on encouraging pupils to be as independent as possible.
- Over the last year the school has begun to develop good systems for monitoring and recording incidents of inappropriate behaviour. This has helped the school to analyse where and why incidents occur and make use of the information to inform individual behaviour risk assessments.
- A strong focus has been given to ensuring all staff are trained in behaviour management strategies, including where necessary using physical contact techniques. This ensures that even in the most difficult of situations pupils are safe and staff are responding in an appropriate manner.
- There is no evidence of bullying in the school. Pupils said how safe they feel in school, particularly because of the support given by staff. In the playground, although many pupils choose their own company as opposed to playing with others, pupils are clearly happy and enjoying their free time.
- There is very clear evidence that pupils who can display anti-social behaviour learn to moderate their behaviour to more socially acceptable levels. A review of individual student case studies shows that many pupils move from having to be always educated on their own to spending almost all of their time with other pupils in a class group.
- Pupils become more confident in different situations. For example, students in the sixth form perform well and with confidence when they visit a local college. Similarly, younger pupils when undertaking shopping expeditions out of school behave in an appropriate manner and are able to independently carry out tasks within the shops.
- Pupils' enjoyment of being in school is shown clearly by their good attendance. Attendance for the last three years has been consistently above the national average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has ensured the school places a strong emphasis on addressing the individual needs of pupils as a consequence of their autism. This has resulted in almost all pupils making good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in improving their ability to be independent, communicate effectively and relate to others.
- The school has ensured that staff and governors are provided with very good training opportunities. These have led to staff developing a range of specialist skills for working with pupils on the autistic spectrum and governors having a clear understanding of their role. Training has proved to be particularly effective in increasing the effectiveness of the support staff have given to pupils to help them behave well in a variety of settings.
- The headteacher, with the strong support of governors, has put a strong focus on improving

teaching and learning. This has included ensuring that staff regularly set improvement targets for each student and providing sufficient support for them to achieve these.

- A new procedure for the performance management of staff has been established. This has identified some weaker performance and, with the full involvement of the governing body, effective action has been taken to address much of this. Teachers on higher salary levels are responding well to increased expectations for their contribution to the school's effectiveness.
- Much of the drive for excellence comes from the headteacher and governors. Other senior leaders, while effectively supporting the school's overall push for excellence through extending the activities offered to pupils, have not been as effective in rigorously checking pupils' progress and ensuring consistency of teaching quality throughout the school. This has led to the small number of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching identified in this report.
- The school has improved and increased the range of activities and courses pupils can follow. This has been particularly effective in the sixth form, where there has been an increased number of opportunities for students to be involved in practical activities. The use of a local college by the sixth form students has proved valuable in helping them prepare for leaving school as the quality of provision and education on offer is good.
- The school knows itself well including a thorough evaluation of the impact of actions carried out during the previous year. This has led to the drawing up of a good school development plan containing the right priorities for improving further.
- Appropriately the school takes safeguarding very seriously. Policies and procedures are up to date and staff with responsibility for child protection are fully qualified. Governors monitor health and safety very carefully.
- The school's financial management is secure. Additional money, allocated to the school through the pupil premium, is used to provide additional individual support for those pupils entitled to this funding. These pupils have responded well to this and are making similar good progress to other pupils in school.
- The local authority has provided the school with good support in checking how well it is doing overall and particularly the school's judgements on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The school provides good support to other local schools through its outreach service.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governors contribute very positively to the drive for excellence that exists throughout the school. Governors have good systems in place to check on how well the school is doing. They are regular visitors to school, usefully taking on specific responsibilities to check on different aspects of the school's work. The minutes of their meetings show they ask probing questions, such as in a recent meeting when they challenged the headteacher to explain how recent training had led to improved teaching. The governing body is fully aware of how the performance of staff is checked, how effective staff are being rewarded and how identified weaker aspects of staff performance are being addressed. Governors monitor financial matters very closely, including how well pupil premium money is spent. They ensure that school policies are regularly reviewed and regularly attend training to update their knowledge and skills.

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	125477
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	402329

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	119
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ron Endicott
Headteacher	Justin Price
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 December 2009
Telephone number	01483 545680
Fax number	01483 545699
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