

# Friern Barnet School

Hemington Avenue, London, N11 3LS

**Inspection dates** 25–26 February 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- Although there was a drop in standards in 2013, there has been a sustained year-on-year increase in GCSE results at grades A\* to C and other qualifications over the last six years. In 2013, nearly all pupils gained A\* to C grades in all qualifications.
- The current Year 11 pupils are making faster progress this year in English and mathematics. They are on track to achieve well in 2014.
- The school's work in the performing arts is exceptionally strong. It inspires teachers and leaders to work on imaginative projects which are exciting and bring the world into pupils' lives.
- Another key strength is the very high quality care provided for each and every pupil with special educational needs. Staff work very successfully to provide whatever individual programme and attention the pupil requires.
- Teaching is good overall and a small proportion is outstanding. Good attention is given to individual pupils in lessons, allowing all groups of pupils to make progress.
- Senior leaders and those in charge of subjects carry out checks on the quality of teaching, and on the progress pupils make, on a regular basis. As a result, the rate of progress in English and mathematics is improving quickly.
- Governance is good. Governors put all their efforts into securing a safe learning environment for all pupils, including those who may need extra help, and in providing educational opportunities that give each pupil routes to follow after Year 11.
- Pupils are safe and secure. Behaviour is good because the school has effective systems in place, in the form of rewards and sanctions, which involve pupils in deciding how effective they are.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. The rate of progress in lessons is sometimes too slow because pupils of different abilities are not given work at the right level of difficulty. Marking of pupils' books is not always done regularly nor consistently.
- Subject leaders have not yet developed a common approach to checking the quality of teaching and learning when working together.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 lessons. Thirteen were observed jointly with the deputy headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with: the senior management team; a number of subject leaders and other leaders; the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority governor on the finance committee; and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to pupils to find out their views of the school in general. They also looked at many work books to gather evidence on pupils’ progress and the impact of teaching over time.
- Inspectors looked at relevant documents, including the school’s self-evaluation, the improvement plan, policies regarding behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to the safeguarding of all pupils.
- Inspectors examined the most recent government data on the attainment of pupils in the school and the school systems for checking on pupils’ progress through the year.
- Inspectors took account of responses from 200 parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Responses from the 46 members of staff who returned questionnaires were also considered.
- Inspectors also took account of surveys run by the school on pupils’ attitudes as well as governors’ surveys of staff opinions.

## Inspection team

Mina Drever, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Cliff Mainey

Additional Inspector

Jalil Shaikh

Additional Inspector

Ian Tustian

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized secondary school. A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision on a part-time basis.
- There are 16 ethnic groups in the school, the largest being White British which makes up nearly one third of the school population. The rest includes Other White, other ethnic groups, African, Indian and many others.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language – nearly half of all pupils – is much larger than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is much larger than the average. This is additional funding for pupils entitled to free school meals, children from service families and those in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well above average.
- A substantial number of pupils – about one fifth in each year group currently on roll – joins the school throughout the years up to Year 11, mostly from different education systems.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is a specialist arts college for the performing arts and has an educational partnership with Woodhouse College, with many pupils going on to attend the sixth form there. There are links with Barnet College, the Barnet Secondary Schools Partnership and many other organisations, which the headteacher has initiated at local, national and international levels with the aim of sharing good practice, for example the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust and Partners in Excellence (PiXL).

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that pupils make more rapid progress by:
  - giving more difficult and demanding work to pupils so that progress can move at a faster pace
  - marking work books more regularly so that all pupils understand exactly what they need to do to improve.
- Develop subject leaders' skills in raising the quality of teaching across subject areas by:
  - supporting subject leaders in developing a common approach to promoting outstanding teaching and learning across subject areas.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils join this school in Year 7 with standards that are often significantly below the national average. Many have severe emotional, social and psychological needs. They achieve well because they benefit from individualised support programmes. A significant number, about one fifth in each year group, joins the school at different stages throughout Years 7 to 11 with no record of progress or attainment because they come from different education systems. Some have little or no English and some may have had breaks in their education before they joined the school. A few pupils in 2013 were not able to sit examinations although they remained on the school's roll. They attended school sporadically and were educated at home for much of the time due to severe medical needs.
- Pupils achieve well from their different starting points. They make good progress. Almost all of them attain A\* to C grades in GCSE and equivalent qualifications, and all of them leave this school to go either to further studies, to apprenticeships or to other employment. Groups from all ethnic backgrounds achieve well.
- The proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, fell below the national average in 2013. However, the current Year 11 pupils have made much faster progress in English and mathematics since September 2013. The results of the November 2013 GCSE examinations indicate that their performance is better than last year's cohort in English and mathematics, with the majority having attained A\* to C grades. This, together with the school data on pupils' progress, shows that achievement is on track to rise this year. The school's policy for early entry to GCSE examinations in November allows many pupils to focus on fewer examinations in the summer and so helps them to achieve well.
- The most able pupils do very well in all their chosen subjects, as well as in English and mathematics. For example, they achieve significantly above the national average in modern languages and in performing arts subjects. This is partly because they love their chosen subjects, but especially because they benefit from the input of teachers with excellent knowledge and effective ways to guide learners towards high achievement.
- Pupils' work books show that the pupils cover a lot of work and make good progress over time. For example, Year 9 English books went from studying Gothic writing in September 2013 to assessing the complex linguistic features of war poetry by February 2014.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good or better progress and achieve better than similar groups nationally. This is because the school has in place individualised programmes to support them in their learning and all teachers check on their progress regularly to adjust the support.
- The Year 7 catch-up grant is used very well to support pupils who come to school with low attainment. There is much cooperation among teachers of different subjects to ensure that these pupils make equally good progress in all subject areas. The school has been particularly effective in encouraging reading in subject areas when pupils carry out research in projects across different subjects.
- Those who speak English as an additional language achieve well because there is a very well thought out programme of support tailored for individual pupils. They are supported on a continuous basis in language across the curriculum. This is a decreasing scale as pupils get more confident and as subject teachers also become more confident in supporting language learning within their subject areas.
- The current pupils eligible for the pupil premium are making more rapid progress than in previous years. In 2013, the gap in attainment between these pupils and their peers was approximately half a grade in English and nearly one and a half grades in mathematics. The attainment gap has now practically closed. The November 2013 examination results places them at less than a quarter of a grade behind in English and on a par with their peers in mathematics.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Teaching is good overall. A small proportion is outstanding. As a result, pupils' progress is at least good.
- Lessons start promptly and pupils get down to work quickly, with very little fuss. They display relaxed, yet purposeful, attitudes towards learning. When asked if they enjoyed studying particular subjects, most pupils said that they hoped it would help them with any future work.
- Where learning is best, pupils are enthused by their teachers' subject knowledge and participate with vigour and intellectual excitement. For example, in a Year 11 English language lesson, pupils analysing how a particular writer used language for a desired effect on readers were captivated by the teacher's love of linguistic analysis and, as one pupil put it, her 'excellent knowledge'.
- On occasion tasks sit too well with what pupils can comfortably do rather than stretching and challenging them to achieve more. This slows down progress. For example, high ability pupils in a language lesson spent too much time going over activities they could tackle very easily before moving on to higher level work.
- High levels of literacy are expected across all subject areas. The recently appointed literacy coordinator runs training sessions across the school for all subject teachers so that a common approach is used in all departments.
- Verbal feedback is usually good and very effective in checking whether pupils have understood clearly what is expected of them, as well as probing more deeply into their grasp of an idea or a concept. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson the teacher used discussion well to reshape questions and extend learning. This helped pupils to be confident about their own understanding.
- The quality of written feedback is inconsistent. Teachers do not follow regularly the school's policy on marking books. They do not always give detailed enough guidance to make sure that pupils know exactly how to improve their work.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils' behaviour is good and pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. A clear behaviour management policy is in place that supports learning and rewards positive behaviour. It sets out clear lines of responsibility from the class teacher to faculties' pastoral teams and school managers.
- A system of rewards and commendation, as well as sanctions, is very successful in promoting good behaviour. For instance, form tutors name students in the weekly newsletter for particularly good behaviour, such as 'endless cheerfulness and boundless enthusiasm' or 'for helping a new student settle in'.
- Incidents of poor behaviour disrupting learning in lessons are rare because the great majority of pupils are keen to learn and teachers manage this well and promptly.
- Students take on responsible roles to assist leaders in ensuring respectful and appropriate behaviour around the school at all times. Roles include that of student learning consultant, peer mentor and anti-bullying ambassador. The students' parliament discusses issues of the month and plays a significant role in maintaining high levels of responsible behaviour, for example by making sure that the environment is free of litter.
- Attendance has improved over the last year and is now close to the national average because managers have been working tirelessly with families to secure more regular attendance. The school has very a stringent system in place to do this on a daily basis.
- The school's systems for keeping pupils safe and secure are good. Parents trust the school's system to keep their children safe and pupils themselves feel very secure and safe. They trust school managers to deal quickly and efficiently with any behaviour incidents.
- The school's systems for pre-empting racist incidents and other types of bullying are sound. Rare incidents are dealt with rigorously and effectively.

**The leadership and management are good**

- Leadership is very strong. All leaders, managers and governors are totally committed to unlocking the potential of each pupil. They have secured sustained and consistent progress since the last inspection. Many pupils benefit from a personalised timetable of activities.
- There are very good systems for checking the performance of teachers. In addition to formal lesson observations, informal drop-ins are widespread and encouraged. An 'open door' policy enables any teacher, manager or senior leader to literally drop into a class at any time to see what is going on in terms of learning.
- Subject leaders are passionate about raising the standards in their departments and have very well-tuned skills in developing interesting and exciting learning experiences. They are beginning to collaborate in planning projects across subject areas. For example, the English, music and history departments have been working together in planning together learning activities for the European Comenius Project on the life and works of Mozart.
- However, subject leaders have not developed, up to this point, a uniform idea of what outstanding teaching and learning look like in practical terms. Although they observe 'model lessons' at many training conferences, they have not yet adopted a common approach to assessing teaching and learning and this limits their impact on improvements to teaching across subjects.
- The gap between the achievement of those eligible for the pupil premium and other pupils has practically closed as a result of effective spending of the government funding. Programmes include the school's reading programme, music tuition and financial support for trips.
- The curriculum gives all pupils opportunities to follow work-related courses as well as academic programmes of study. All pupils are supported in achieving their best and are well prepared to either continue in education or to make career choices suited to them. They are all encouraged to participate in activities which are the core of the school's arts curriculum, including dramatic, dancing and musical productions.
- The school provides unique experiences for developing the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of education. Chief among them this year is the European Comenius Project studying the life and works of Mozart. It leads nine European schools into a journey of exploration, underpinned by a desire to instil in all the pupils involved a strong sense of European citizenship.
- Parents are informed of all that happens in the school on a weekly basis with a very long and rich newsletter, to which pupils contribute with their endeavours, achievements and exciting experiences, for example a visit to Cambridge University.
- The local authority has historically worked very well with the school in providing support in recruitment and providing opportunities for networking with cluster schools, including nursery, primary and secondary schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are extremely involved at all levels of the school's work. They particularly enjoy working with the students' parliament because they can thus advise the senior managers of what is important to pupils. Their combined skills allow them to support and challenge the managers, through formal performance management, and less formally through questioning the school's work and performance at governors' meetings. They have played a key role in raising the levels of attendance because they recognised this to be crucial to pupils' achievement. They are fully conscious of the reasons for the drop-in standards in 2013 and are absolutely confident that the managers did everything they could possibly do in engaging with families to secure more regular attendance for their pupils. They also appreciate too that there is still much to be done in raising the quality of teaching to outstanding. They support the measures of the excellent school development plan, to which governors, pupils and staff contribute fully. They manage a very 'tight ship' with the available budget, including securing effective spending of the pupil premium. They ensure that the school meets safeguarding requirements.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101345
<b>Local authority</b>	Barnet
<b>Inspection number</b>	440942

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	798
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Margaret Johnson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Jeremy Turner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10–11 February 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	02083682777
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