

Freebrough Academy

Linden Road, Brotton, Saltburn, North Yorkshire, TS12 5SJ

Inspection dates 7–8 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The determination and high ambitions of the inspirational principal has ensured that previous shortfalls in performance have been successfully tackled. As a result, teaching and achievement are good and improving strongly.
- The proportion of students awarded at least five or more good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, have improved significantly year on year and is now close to the national average.
- Increased proportions of the most-able students achieve high grades. More students are exceeding what is expected of them, particularly in English.
- Teaching is led and managed very well. Staff willingly share their ideas and methods to make learning engaging and meaningful.
- The good curriculum develops students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Students with special educational needs make progress similar to that of their classmates. In some individual cases their progress is rapid.
- Gaps in performance between disadvantaged students and their peers are narrowing, rapidly in English.
- Relationships are a significant strength in the academy. This helps students to work diligently, and to ensure that pupils are kept safe and behave well both in classrooms and at social times.
- Together middle leaders are a driving force adding momentum to the pace of improvement, because they respond well to the challenges senior leaders present.
- Governance is strong and very committed to achieving the academy's high ambitions.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In mathematics there is not yet enough teaching of the highest quality to produce a consistent pattern of rapid progress and high achievement. Attainment gaps for the disadvantaged are closing, but not always rapidly.
- The recently established sixth form requires improvement. Teaching does not always ensure sufficient breadth and depth in students' knowledge, understanding and personal skills. Consequently, students' achievement requires improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 35 lessons, including eight paired observations and work scrutiny was carried out with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and undertook learning walks around the academy in order to check the quality of what is provided for students.
- The inspectors spoke with students and had discussions with the headteacher, faculty heads, staff, governors, the chief education officer of the local authority and the school improvement partner.
- The inspectors also examined a range of documents including those related to safeguarding, the academy's view of how well it is doing, the monitoring of staff performance, the academy's improvement plan and records relating to students' progress and behaviour.
- The inspectors took account of 36 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 21 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Steven Goldsmith	Additional Inspector
Patrick Hargreaves	Additional Inspector
Alexandra Hook	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average sized academy which caters for students aged eleven to eighteen. It is sponsored by Teesside University (the lead sponsor), Redcar and Cleveland Council and Prior Pursglove College.
- Almost all of the pupils are of White British backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- Currently, half the students are disadvantaged and therefore eligible for support from pupil premium funding. This is much higher than the national average. This funding is for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A purpose-built Enterprise Centre, designated as a regional hub for the Peter Jones Enterprise Academy, accommodates a small, but growing sixth form.
- No students are currently entered early for a GCSE examination.
- Close to one third of each year group in Years 10 and 11 attend off-site alternative provision on a part-time basis, together with a small number of Year 9 students. This is provided by East Coast Training, Prior Pursglove College, Redcar and Cleveland Training Services and the Eston Centre (EOTAS).
- The academy has experienced a large turnover in staffing in the past twelve months.
- Senior leadership was strengthened in September 2014 with the appointment of two deputy principals.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to accelerate progress and improve the achievement and attainment of students of all abilities in mathematics, especially for the disadvantaged by:
 - raising staff expectations even further of what students of all abilities and starting points can do and achieve
 - improving the accuracy and quality of layout and presentation of students' work in books
 - enhancing the quality of teachers' marking, so that students are clear about what they have done well, and are given concise feedback with well-defined steps for further improvement
 - making certain that students respond promptly to requests for corrections to their work.
- Improve student achievement in the sixth form by:
 - making certain that staff expectations are always high to make sure that students gain an in-depth understanding of the subjects that they are studying
 - ensuring that each student receives a coherent and meaningful full-time programme of academic and personal development.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

are good

- The principal's clarity of vision and drive to secure the highest levels of achievement has been fundamental in the academy's unrelenting improvement since opening. Her strong sense of purpose permeates the academy from top to bottom. All staff and students have subscribed to the academy ethos and vision. Parents and the local communities display increasingly high levels of confidence and trust in the academy's effectiveness.
- Rigorous checking systems ensure that the academy has an accurate and detailed view of its performance. Senior leaders, including governors, are in no doubt of what is required to further strengthen performance.
- Middle leaders are increasingly reflective, self-critical and skilled in managing the areas for which they are responsible. They set high expectations of themselves and for their staff teams and maintain a sharp focus on performance and the outcomes for students. Improved management of mathematics is ensuring that the actions taken are having a positive impact on students' outcomes.
- The leadership of teaching is a clear strength. The quality of learning and students' achievement are robustly scrutinised. Training is well thought out and targeted to match academy priorities and tailored to individual staff needs. Performance management is effective and ensures that pay progression is linked to outcomes for students. The support and training for those who are newly qualified is of a particularly high quality.
- The good curriculum is broad and balanced and matches local needs well. It responds to students' needs and interests really well and develops their skills and capabilities successfully. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is addressed well and prepares students for life in modern Britain. The business and enterprise specialism has clear benefits enriching the curriculum breadth, especially in the sixth form.
- Discrimination is not tolerated in any form and firm emphasis is placed upon fostering respect and tolerance in all students' relationships. Staff work hard to ensure that all students have an equal chance of success, regardless of their starting points.
- Students receive helpful, objective careers guidance and information that helps them make considered decisions about their next steps. All students successfully progress to employment, training and education.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to ensure that the needs of disadvantaged students are met well. As a result, attainment gaps are closing, although more quickly in English than in mathematics. Funds are used to provide an impressive array of visits and visitors and a programme of enrichment activities for students at the end of each academy day. This successfully extends students' range of experiences and raises their aspirations.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and day-to-day practice to keep students safe is effective. This includes the thorough checking of attendance, achievement and behaviour of all students, including those educated off site.
- The academy works increasingly effectively with parents, including those who are sometimes hard to reach, encouraging them to play a more active role in their children's learning and development.
- The local authority has an accurate view of the academy's performance and has worked well with co-sponsors since the opening, providing challenge and support in equal measure for the academy's senior leaders and managers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The shrewd leadership of a dedicated and effective governing body ensures that all governors play an active role in the life of the academy. The governors have an accurate and detailed insight of the academy's performance data and the quality of teaching. They are fully aware of the strengths and areas for improvement. For example, they were uncompromising in their support when resolving underperformance in mathematics. They make certain staff performance management is robust and are aware of what is done to reward good teaching and to tackle underperformance. Their monitoring of pupil premium funding is sharply and effectively focused on the outcomes for students. The links with the sponsors are strong and underpin the strength of challenge and the holding to account of leaders and managers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are friendly, polite and very positive about the quality of

experiences that they receive in the academy. They take pride in their appearance and their work. They arrive promptly, well prepared for their lessons. Relationships with staff are good and sometimes excellent, underpinning the strong sense of community in the academy. Consequently, the atmosphere in classrooms and in social areas is calm, harmonious and orderly.

- Students and staff report that behaviour is good, and has considerably improved since the previous inspection. Students settle quickly in lessons, are enthusiastic and are prepared to work hard, particularly when activities are thought-provoking and challenging. Disruption in any form in lessons is rare, because learning is made interesting and the academy has effective systems in place to manage behaviour. As a result, exclusions have been reduced considerably and are now below average.
- High quality care is provided for all students, including those students who are potentially vulnerable. Parents report that high levels of support are provided for their children.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Students report that they feel safe and parents confirm this in their responses to the online survey. They say that bullying in any form is infrequent and that any incidents are resolved by staff quickly and effectively. They are very aware of the different forms that bullying takes, the risks connected to the use of new technology and how to make the right decisions to keep themselves healthy and fit. As a result, they are aware of how to avoid risk and danger.
- Effective arrangements are in place to ensure that students attending alternative provision are kept safe.
- Attendance is in line with the national average, which represents continuous improvement since the academy opened. Persistent absence has also been greatly reduced. This is a direct consequence of the determination of leaders and managers to constantly improve.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. Senior leaders work assiduously to ensure that the quality of learning continually improves. Underperformance is tackled decisively. This is evident in mathematics, where the quality of learning is now improving rapidly as result of the resolute action that has been taken.
- Teachers have increasingly high expectations of what students of all abilities can achieve, including the most able. Teachers are diligent and provide a wide range of interesting, thought-provoking tasks and activities. Reading and writing are taught effectively and the teaching of mathematical skills across subjects is more and more well-embedded. Increasingly methods are adopted that inspire students to think analytically, explain their thinking, make decisions, adopt solutions and provide reasons for their choices, stimulate them and hold their interest well.
- When students' progress is fastest and achievement highest:
 - expectations are high and challenging and much is demanded of students of all abilities
 - activities are thoughtfully matched to students' abilities and needs, skilfully using their available progress information
 - excellent relationships create a highly positive classroom atmosphere which encourages students to work hard and learn effectively
 - skilful questioning constantly checks and tests students' thinking and understanding and speedily identifies any misconceptions.
- When progress is a little variable and achievement not high enough:
 - not enough is expected or demanded of students and the work set not challenging enough, such as in the accurate layout and presentation of their work in mathematics books
 - tasks sometimes lack that essential spark to create interest and enhance debate with classmates
 - questioning does not always check or follow students' thinking closely enough to test and deepen their understanding or resolve misunderstandings
 - marking does not always make sure that students are clear about precisely what they have to do to improve and ensure that corrections are made.
- In learning when progress is fastest, students' interest is captured and held and their thinking and understanding constantly questioned. For example, a group of Year 10 students was observed totally absorbed considering the impact of motivation on an athlete's performance in sport. Thought-provoking questions encouraged students to think analytically, justify their thinking and arrive at considered decisions or conclusions. This leads to rapid progress especially when students work together to debate and develop their ideas.

- Most teachers mark students' work frequently and accurately judge the quality of their work. When this is consistently and systematically completed, such as in English, students are clear about what they have to do to improve to reach and exceed their targets. When this is not as consistently completed, students do not always complete essential corrections and do not receive concise, well-defined steps for improvement.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Since the academy opened, students' achievement and attainment has improved a great deal year on year, because senior leaders have maintained a relentless focus upon improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning. Consequently, underperformance has been eradicated and any underachievement quickly eliminated.
- Students usually enter the academy with below average skills. In 2014, the proportion of students attaining five or more A*-C, including English and mathematics, rose significantly to just below the national average. By the end of Year 11, students' overall attainment was above national figures in a majority of subjects. Highly effective teaching in English resulted in high achievement. In several subjects, including English, science and history, the proportion of students gaining GCSE examinations at grade C and above was appreciably above national averages. As a result of improvements in the teaching of biology, chemistry, physics, geography business studies and French the proportions of current Year 11 students on course to attain a higher examination grade are rising quickly.
- All groups of students are now making good progress. Yet there are some variations in attainment. These largely reflect the legacy of underachievement which is being tackled effectively. Boys' attainment on entry to the academy is lower than that of girls. Both groups make good progress and although attainment gaps remain, they are narrowing quickly.
- In mathematics, where there has been considerable instability in staffing, achievement and attainment slipped below national averages in 2014. As a result of the concerted action taken by senior leaders, this position is being quickly reversed. In Years 7 to 9, academy data confirmed by inspection evidence reveal at least good and sometimes rapid progress in mathematics. Current Year 11 students of all abilities are on course to match national averages, in both their achievement and attainment, as the legacy of underachievement in mathematics is being systematically eradicated.
- The constantly improving teaching and the ever more sharply-focused classroom support are ensuring that the proportions of students exceeding expected progress are rising quickly. In 2014, almost all students in Year 11 achieved a grade C and well over one third achieved an A* or A in their GCSE examinations in English, demonstrating their good progress.
- The work scrutinised of the most-able students demonstrates that they are responding really well to teachers' high expectations and thought-provoking methods. Consequently their achievement is steadily rising and is now good, because of the improvements in the quality of the teaching they receive.
- Overall the gaps in performance between disadvantaged students and their classmates are narrowing, rapidly in some subjects. In English at the end of Year 11, disadvantaged students attained broadly the same grade as non-disadvantaged students nationally and just over half a grade lower than other students in the academy. In mathematics, although the gaps are closing, the rate is a little slower. In 2014, students attained just over a grade lower than others, both nationally and within the academy. Current academy information, substantiated by inspection evidence, confirms that gaps in English are on course to be eliminated by the end of the current Year 11 and significantly reduced in mathematics. This is because these students are making consistently good progress.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is having a very positive impact on the achievement of those students entering the academy with skills in reading, writing and mathematics that are sometimes weak. Careful pinpointing of students' needs coupled with effective methods, such as in the teaching of reading, number and calculating ensure at least good and accelerating progress.
- Students with special educational needs make good and occasionally outstanding progress from their individual starting points, because their intervention and support is so precisely matched to their needs.
- Students who are educated off site for part of their curriculum complete their vocational courses successfully. This helps to ensure that all students at the end of Year 11 progress to employment, training or education.

The sixth form provision requires improvement

- Senior leaders and managers in the recently established sixth form are working tirelessly to consolidate

and extend the quality of vocational provision. Students' prior attainment information is used effectively to ensure that students follow appropriate vocational courses in the purpose-built enterprise centre.

- In 2014, the results achieved by the small number of students who sat examinations revealed attainment that was broadly in line with national averages in their respective vocational subjects. Progress was as expected. Consequently, achievement requires improvement.
- Teaching is normally highly structured, with regular and timely interventions from staff to ensure that students meet course requirements. However, expectations of what each student needs to achieve are not high enough to ensure that students gain a deeper understanding of the subjects that they are studying.
- Retention rates of those continuing to Year 13 are not high, but all students in Year 12 complete their Level Two qualifications. As a result, all students progress to employment, training or other educational routes. Some students are highly motivated and are fully committed to their education. A minority follows only a partial timetable of taught or study sessions. Consequently, opportunities are lost to broaden and deepen their knowledge and understanding and enhance their personal development, for example, by developing students' ability to study by themselves.
- Attendance in the sixth form is in line with the national average and students' behaviour is good. When involved in the wider life of the academy, sixth-form students are good role models for younger students.
- Leaders and managers have established a clear rationale for the sixth-form provision based upon careful consideration of local employment, training and education opportunities. A clear vision for growth is in place. As a consequence, the number of students studying in the centre is growing steadily and includes students from other schools choosing to join because the provision matches their talents and needs. However, insufficient emphasis is placed upon a full-time experience which supports both the students' academic and personal development.

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	136139
Local authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	453536

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	712
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Liz Holey
Headteacher	Linda Halbert
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2013
Telephone number	01287 676305
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