

Freshwaters Primary Academy

Freshwaters, School Lane, Harlow, CM20 3QA

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	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
Early years provision	Good		2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The head of school, senior leaders, the academy trust and the advisory board have worked well together to raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching. They have high expectations and the academy is continuously improving.
- The academy provides well for children in the early years. They make good progress in communication and language, physical development and in personal, social and emotional development in the Nursery. They achieve well in all areas of learning in the Reception Year to reach a good level of development by the time they move up to Year 1.
- Achievement is good overall at Key Stages 1 and 2, and pupils do particularly well in Year 2 and in Years 5 and 6. Most pupils in other year groups make at least the expected amount of progress.
- Teaching is good and the academy has effective systems for developing teachers' skills. This has enabled it to bring about continuous improvement in the quality of teaching despite a number of staff changes.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in the academy. They are eager to learn and usually concentrate well in lessons. Many older pupils display outstanding attitudes and behave exceptionally well.
- The academy promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. It promotes British values effectively and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Children do not have as many opportunities as they could to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills in the Nursery.
- Where there are gaps between the attainment of some pupils and their classmates, the academy does not identify as closely as it could what help they need.
- When leaders check pupils' books, they do not focus enough on making sure that tasks are not too difficult for less-able pupils.
- In some classes, teachers' marking does not always make clear to pupils what they could do to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 28 lessons across all the classes. In combination with looking at pupils’ books, talking to them about their work and checking their progress over time, this provided a balance of evidence on teaching and learning. Inspectors heard some Year 1 pupils read, looked at lunchtime and playtime arrangements, talked with a group of pupils and observed two assemblies.
- Meetings were held with the head of school, the assistant headteachers – who also lead English, mathematics and the early years - and with a lead practitioner. Discussions took place with the Chief Executive Officer of representatives of Burnt Mill Academy Trust, the academy sponsor, and with two representatives of the academy advisory board.
- The inspection team considered the 17 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and took into account the 33 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team observed the academy’s work and looked at a range of documentation. This included: the academy’s self-evaluation and development plan; records of pupils’ attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance; and systems for protecting and safeguarding pupils.

Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Deborah Leahy	Additional Inspector
John Greevy	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Freshwaters Primary became an academy on 1 September 2013. It is sponsored by Burnt Mill Academy Trust.
- The academy is an above average-sized primary school.
- Children in the Reception Year attend full time. Those in the Nursery attend part time for five mornings each week.
- The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage is above average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is average. This funding is for pupils in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The previous headteacher left the school at the end of the autumn term in 2013. The present head of school took over as acting headteacher from that point and his leadership was made permanent in September 2014. Since the school became an academy, there have been a number of other changes in teaching staff.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and build on existing strengths in teaching by:
 - providing more frequent opportunities for children to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills in the Nursery
 - identifying in greater detail the gaps in learning for pupils whose attainment lags behind that of their classmates and of pupils nationally, including some pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding
 - sharpening the monitoring of pupils' books to ensure teachers always give less-able pupils work that is not too difficult for them and which matches the next steps in their learning
 - making sure that teachers in all classes use their marking to full effect to inform pupils of how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The head of school is a dynamic and highly motivated leader, and he shares with the academy trust a strong commitment to making Freshwaters as good as possible. The academy is improving continuously and the capacity for further improvement is good. Leaders have established a culture in which relationships are positive, teaching can flourish and pupils are expected to behave well.
- The leadership of teaching is good and there are effective systems for managing teachers' performance. Good support for new teachers when they join the academy has enabled leaders to bring about continuous improvement in the quality of teaching despite a number of staff changes.
- The assistant headteachers make a valuable contribution to improving teaching and raising achievement, including in English, mathematics and the early years. Teachers with responsibilities for other subjects are developing their roles. They have good opportunities to increase their skills through training, much of which is provided through the academy trust.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' academic and personal development well. The academy makes sure that pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, as well as providing a range of special events to stimulate their learning. Educational visits and visitors to the academy make a good contribution to pupils' experiences.
- The academy fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. It promotes British values at every opportunity and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. The school community is culturally diverse and the school finds a balance between respecting individual cultures and promoting Britain as the society in which pupils live. A Tower of London poppy takes pride of place in the school entrance, purchased by Year 6 on their Remembrance Day visit.
- The academy uses its pupil premium funding appropriately to support disadvantaged pupils. It has used the funding to employ additional adults to work with the pupils, including a learning mentor, so that they have an increased amount of support. This is helping the pupils concerned to make good progress.
- The academy makes effective use of its primary physical education and sport premium to increase pupils' physical skills and improve their health and well-being. It has used the funding to develop teachers' confidence in teaching gymnastics, to increase the number of lunchtime and after-school clubs and the amount of competitive sporting opportunities for pupils.
- Parents are encouraged to take an active part in their children's learning and are kept well informed about the academy's work. Almost all parents who expressed their views are satisfied with most aspects of the academy's work and would recommend it to others.
- The academy has thorough systems for keeping pupils safe, and its arrangements meet statutory requirements. It conducts careful checks on all adults who work with the pupils, ensures staff are well trained and has rigorous procedures for recording and following up any concerns.
- Leaders carry out many checks on teachers' work and they keep extremely thorough records of strengths and areas for development in teaching. This has helped the school to improve the quality of teaching, and teachers generally receive good advice about how to improve their effectiveness. When leaders check pupils' books, however, they have not focused enough on making sure that tasks are matched consistently to the next steps in learning for less-able pupils at Key Stage 1.
- Leaders collect a wealth of information about pupils' attainment and progress. They use this to check how well pupils are progressing and to try to ensure pupils have equal opportunities so that none are discriminated against. Nevertheless, where there are gaps between the attainment of some pupils and their classmates, the academy does not look as closely as it could to identify in exactly what aspect of their learning they need extra help.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is effective and the academy trust shares with the head of school a strong vision and high expectations. The trust and members of the academy advisory board work closely together to support and challenge senior leaders. They are well informed about teaching through visits to the academy, checks on pupils' work and the detailed reports they receive from the head of school. The trust and the academy advisory board carefully consider the impact of teachers' work on pupils' achievement when making decisions about their pay. They have rigorous systems in place for managing teachers' performance and for tackling any underperformance. In some cases, this has led to staff changes and in others, teachers have been supported to improve through additional training.
- The academy trust and advisory board regularly check data to see how well the academy is performing, including to make sure that pupil premium funding is having a positive impact on the progress of eligible pupils. A recent external review of the use of pupil premium funding, commissioned by the academy trust, has provided useful guidance to senior leaders.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There are some examples of outstanding behaviour in the older classes, and the rate of attendance is above average.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and enjoy school. Most pupils take pride in their work and readily contribute in lessons. They behave well at break times, playing harmoniously together, and when they come together as a whole school in assembly and the dining room.
- Older pupils readily help younger ones and respond very well to opportunities to contribute to school improvement. The 'junior leadership team' has observed lessons and provided feedback to the head of school and to other pupils on what it found out about behaviour and teaching.
- Low-level disruption is rare. Occasionally, younger pupils become fidgety in some lessons so that they need to be reminded about the importance of concentrating and listening carefully. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, however, and the school has well-established systems for rewarding pupils and dealing with any inappropriate behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe in the academy and they learn about how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- Not all parents expressed the view that their children are protected from bullying but pupils interviewed said that they feel the school works well to prevent bullying. School records suggest that this is the case. Pupils are clear about different types of bullying and are confident that there is an adult they could go to if they had any concerns.
- Pupils say that 'the new gates make the academy safe' and an increased level of staff supervision when parents deliver and collect their children has made them feel more secure at the start and end of the day. Assemblies focus strongly on promoting positive relationships between pupils, making them aware of the importance of caring for others and of staying safe in school and beyond.

The quality of teaching is good

- Inspection findings, work in pupils' books and the academy's own records show that teaching is good. It enables pupils to make particularly good progress in the Reception Year, in Year 2 and in Years 5 and 6.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use questioning well to check pupils' understanding. This was done especially well in some lessons where teachers challenged the most-able pupils to explain and deepen their thinking.

- Staff have good relationships with their classes and usually set work that is interesting and varied. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning and teachers deploy them well. Additional adults provide a good balance of support and challenge for pupils, so that they have scope to find the answer for themselves yet receive help where necessary.
- The teaching of reading is good and phonics sessions, where pupils learn about the sounds linked to letters, are matched well to the next steps in their development. Teaching in these sessions is particularly challenging for the most-able pupils so that they make rapid progress. The teaching of reading is good higher up the school, and teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to research and draw their own conclusions about what they read.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. In the Reception Year, teachers pay careful attention to teaching mathematical language so that children are able to use it correctly. Teachers provide a good level of challenge for different children. At Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers usually match work well to the next stage in pupils' learning.
- The teaching of writing is generally good. In the Reception classes, teachers make good use of resources to help children who are at early stages of recording and encourage them to write for a purpose as part of their play. Teachers match writing tasks well to the next steps in pupils' learning in Year 2 and at the upper end of the school, and to the needs of the most able pupils in other year groups.
- At times in Year 1, writing tasks are too difficult for less-able pupils so that they do not make as much progress as they should. Pupils' books show that teachers do not always identify those who need extra help with forming their letters and who are struggling with the basics of writing.
- Teachers in some classes provide good quality written feedback to pupils when they mark their books, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Lower down the school, marking indicates whether pupils have got their work right and if they have learnt what they were meant to in the lesson. However, it does not always make clear what they could do to improve their work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the early years with attainment that is broadly typical for their age, though a significant proportion has weaker skills in speaking and listening, literacy, mathematics and in their understanding of the world. Children made good progress to reach average standards by the end of the Reception Year in 2014 and those currently in the Reception Year are making good progress in all areas of learning.
- While results in the screening of phonics at the end of Year 1 were well below average in 2014, children in the Reception classes and pupils in Year 1 are now making good progress in learning about letters of the alphabet and the sounds linked to them. Their attainment is in line with expectations for their age.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2014 were broadly average in reading, writing, mathematics and in English grammar, punctuation and spelling. As these pupils' attainment was low at the end of Year 2, they made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and some made outstanding progress.
- Pupils' books and the school's records of attainment and progress show that the achievement of pupils currently in the school is good at Key Stage 2, and they make particularly good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils have good opportunities to develop their literacy skills in subjects such as history and science, and they produce a good amount of written work. In a lesson on Greek mythology, pupils in Years 4 and 5 produced careful accounts and beautiful illustrations of the story of Hydra.
- The most-able pupils make good progress. In the Reception classes and at Key Stage 1, they do very well with their reading. Throughout the school, their books show that they produce a good amount of work in mathematics and thoughtful and powerful written work. A most-able pupil in Year 6 wrote, 'My secret is made from the wind of an eternal blizzard; ice dipped into the cup of life; the blinding light of Heaven...'

- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates. In some year groups, their attainment is slightly better than that of the rest of the class.
- In 2014, attainment at the end of Year 2 was below average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, most pupils made at least the expected amount of progress at Key Stage 1 because their attainment was below average when they moved up to Year 1. Pupils currently in the school are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 and their attainment is in line with expectations for their age. Pupils are making good progress in reading and mathematics in Year 1, but work is too difficult at times for less-able pupils in writing so that they make less progress than they should.
- In the Nursery, children make good progress in communication and language, in developing their physical, personal and social skills. They make good progress in learning about numbers and in listening to stories when the staff focus on these areas, but they do not practise their literacy and mathematical skills often enough.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who left the academy in 2014 made less progress than their classmates during their time in Key Stage 2. Since then, the academy has been improving the way it supports the needs of pupils with learning difficulties, and progress records show that they are now making at least the expected amount of progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 were a year behind their classmates and four terms behind pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014. However, they made better progress than their classmates in reading and mathematics and better than pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The school is working to narrow the remaining gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates in some year groups, and these pupils are generally making good progress.

The early years provision is good

- The early years is led and managed well. The academy has effective systems for finding out what children can already do when they join the Nursery and Reception classes. There are good opportunities for parents to contribute to their children's development, and staff keep them well informed about how they can support learning at home.
- Achievement in the early years is good and children are well prepared for moving up to Key Stage 1. Although children join the academy with weaknesses in a number of areas, an average proportion reached a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year in 2014. Children did particularly well in communication and language and in their physical development, though marginally less well in reading, writing and number.
- Children are making good progress in all areas of learning in the Reception Year. Teaching in these classes is consistently good and the staff make sure that all the children have frequent opportunities to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills. Work is challenging and motivating so that the children make rapid progress. A higher proportion of the children are working in line with attainment typically found for their age than at the same time last year.
- Children make good progress in communication and language, in physical development and in their personal, social and emotional development in the Nursery because the staff place greatest emphasis on these areas of learning. Teaching in these areas is good.
- Children in the Nursery class have some opportunities to develop their early mark making, enjoy listening to stories and find out about numbers and geometric shapes. However, activities to develop their literacy and mathematical skills are not provided as frequently as they should be. This means that children have to make up for some lost time when they move up to the Reception Year. Although their overall achievement is good, this means that they do not make as much progress as they could in these areas of

learning.

- Children behave well and become readily absorbed in activities. They develop trusting relationships with the staff, get on well with one another and feel safe. The classrooms all have a good range of toys and learning materials and the outdoor areas make a good contribution to children's 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	139398
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	450032

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	326
Appropriate authority	The academy advisory board
Chair	Hamid Ali
Head of School	Marios Solomonides
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
Telephone number	01279 454688
Email address	admin@freshwaters.essex.sch.uk

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