

Freemantles School

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

Inspection dates

2–3 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Senior leaders and governors have ensured that the school continues to improve. Their relentless drive for excellence ensures outstanding outcomes for the large majority of pupils.
- The headteacher has high expectations of himself and all staff. A strong sense of accountability pervades the school.
- Leaders at all levels are clear about their responsibilities. They know they are expected to lead and are enthusiastic about doing so.
- Staff have a highly developed sense of the needs of individual pupils. Consequently, teaching is of a very high quality, providing pupils with constant opportunities to succeed.
- Governors are extremely effective in their roles. Their partnership with school leaders is strategic in nature, but enables them to access and understand the daily life of the school.
- Procedures and day-to-day measures to keep pupils safe are robust. The caring culture of the school ensures that the well-being of pupils is the top priority.
- Support staff, including non-teaching staff, are highly skilled and dedicated. They provide pupils, who all have very complex needs, with a remarkable degree of care and support.
- Very clearly stated aims underpin the school's ethos. Leaders' priorities are the right ones. Because of this, pupils make exceptional progress, both socially and academically.
- The school's environment provides pupils with outstanding spaces to learn. Resources, including those outside the classroom, are very high quality and used to great effect.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive due to the quality of guidance, support and challenge they receive from all staff.
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds do as well as other pupils, because leaders ensure that their wider needs are well catered for.
- Pupils behave remarkably well most of the time. Staff are skilled at ensuring that pupils' anxieties are kept at low levels, meaning disruptions to learning are minimised.
- The quality of provision is equally effective across all phases of the school. Early years and sixth form provision are strong.
- Pupils attend well. Absence rates are very low, especially when the context of the school is taken into account.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to nurture and develop the close partnerships with other local schools, including those in the local special school partnership, so that more pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from the exceptional provision the school has to offer.
- Ensure that work on developing a new system to track both the academic, and social and emotional progress of pupils with complex needs continues, so that the school's research contributes to improving current methodology in this area.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher leads the school extremely well. His vision is one of excellence and his expectation is that all staff will aspire to this. Under his leadership, the school has improved rapidly since the last inspection.
- Senior leaders work well as a team, supporting the headteacher with the more strategic aspects of improving the school, while enabling middle leaders to be effective in day-to-day management. Communication is strong, leading to cohesive decision making, which has a positive impact on all aspects of the school.
- The headteacher ensures that levels of accountability are high. Teaching and support staff are clear about what is expected of them. The impact of this is evident around the school, where a culture of high-quality teaching and learning has an extremely positive impact on pupil progress.
- Senior leaders track progress well and are able to act when individual pupils are in danger of falling behind, either academically or with their all-important personal development. Collaborative work with other special schools ensures that the school's assessment systems are sound, although leaders want to develop this aspect of their work.
- The school's curriculum meets the needs of pupils very well. A clear focus on increasing levels of communication, fostering independence and developing pupils' social understanding underpins all aspects of teaching. This ensures that pupils are better able to access learning and benefit fully from the varied opportunities staff provide for them.
- Some aspects of the curriculum are delivered on a one-to-one basis. Individual or small-group tutorials focus on developing social values, or promoting a deeper understanding of spiritual, moral and cultural aspects of life in modern Britain. Aspects of tolerance, respect and the need to acknowledge the importance of equality and fairness are carefully and sensitively woven throughout the curriculum.
- Much of the curriculum focuses on preparing pupils for life outside school. Teachers plan learning with roots firmly based in real life, helping pupils to make sense of the world beyond school. Concepts such as money and time feature strongly, as do opportunities to provide pupils with sensory experiences which help them make links with prior learning.
- Extra-curricular provision is very strong. In many ways, it is difficult to judge where the everyday curriculum ends and the wider curriculum begins. As the headteacher proudly pointed out, 'Not many schools start with residential trips in the early years.' Visits to local activity or sports centres, as well as the on-site forest school and horticulture area, complete with chickens and other domestic animals, all help provide pupils with a rich and rewarding curriculum.
- The school receives a range of extra government funding to support pupils. Primary physical education and sport funding, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, and funding to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is all used wisely to have maximum benefit for the specific groups that the funding is intended for.
- Links with the local authority are strong and mutually beneficial, including shared working to provide high-quality specialist outreach support to other local schools.

- The local partnership between special schools is also strong, providing staff with first-rate opportunities to moderate practice, as well as opportunities for high-quality professional development.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school well and ensure that school leaders focus on the right priorities for improvement. They are effective at maintaining a strategic overview, while having a clear understanding of the day-to-day challenges that staff face.
- Governors understand the many strengths of the school, including how leaders monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and how this impacts on the progress pupils make. Their partnership with the headteacher and other senior leaders is open, honest and strong. This ensures that an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect permeates the school, with positive consequences for pupils.
- Recent changes in the membership of the governing body, including the appointment of a new chair of governors, have been managed well. A stable core of governors has ensured that statutory requirements have continued to be met.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The welfare and safety of pupils are given the highest priority by all staff. Systems and processes are very sound. Policies, staff training and all statutory requirements are in place to ensure that pupils and staff are safe both in and out of school. More importantly, leaders have ensured that the culture for child protection and the safeguarding of pupils is very strong.
- Due to many of the school's pupils having such a high level of complex needs, many staff have much wider experience of their requirements or are more highly qualified than might normally be expected. This includes members of staff who work in close partnership with professionals from outside the school. This ensures that communication with other agencies is strong, affording pupils extra levels of care when required, and enabling staff to access the right kind of support when needed.
- Parents in particular were rightly clear that the school cares for their children very well. All parents who talked to inspectors during the inspection, or who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View, indicated that they feel their children are happy and safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers know their pupils extremely well. This helps them plan learning opportunities that are well matched to individual pupils' requirements. Consequently, staff are able to provide the solid foundations required by pupils with very complex needs to become successful learners.
- Developing pupils' communication skills is one of the key aims of teaching and support staff. Opportunities to encourage collaborative working between pupils are particularly effective, especially for those pupils who have little or no capacity for the spoken word. As result, classrooms are happy and productive places, where pupils engage with learning well.
- Staff understand that pupils need to make meaningful connections in order to make

progress in learning. Much of the school's teaching is based on real life, and supports pupils in being able to make sense of the world around them. This approach is especially effective for older pupils, who become increasingly independent as they move through the school.

- Teachers are highly skilled at using a variety of methods and approaches to ensure that pupils understand what is required. Expectations for all pupils are high, no matter how complex their needs. This was clear for inspectors to see during classroom visits, where the levels of challenge seen met the needs of pupils very well, including for pupils who are more academically able.
- The school's most able pupils do well. Small numbers allow flexible arrangements to teach pupils in small groups based on their individual needs, communication skills, and their academic ability.
- During the inspection, one group of key stage 4 pupils were challenged to record their thoughts prior to a visit to a local restaurant. Because of the way learning was organised, the most able pupils were expected to work independently to write about the trip, while other pupils were given varying degrees of support to record their ideas, using alternative methods of communication. All pupils in the group were highly engaged in the task, not only because of the excitement generated by the impending visit, but also because of the way that learning had been planned for them. All pupils experienced success, and all made excellent progress.
- Many of the school's staff are highly experienced and specialists in their field. One-to-one support for pupils is the norm, although support staff are very careful to maintain the balance required to ensure that they facilitate pupils' learning, rather than complete the work for them.
- Pupils are taught to read using a number of different methods, including the use of phonics. Most-able readers were heard to read with great accuracy, clearly enjoying the use of words and 'performing' to an audience. Those with less developed reading skills were supported well to make the progress required to become more confident readers.
- Learning outside classrooms, at the school's on-site horticultural area for instance, is an important aspect of provision. Staff are skilled at employing the school's impressive grounds and outdoor facilities for the benefit of pupils, creating learning opportunities that engage and excite, as well as developing life skills.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is remarkably consistent across the school. Expectations are just as high in the early years as they are in the sixth form. Because of this, the large majority of pupils, including the very few pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, are making exceptional progress as they move through the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Leaders have ensured that developing pupils' well-being sits at the top of the school's priorities. Because of this, pupils' social and emotional needs are increasingly well met as they move through the school.

- Developing pupils' confidence and the impact this has on their ability to become independent learners is a great strength of the school. Staff know that maintaining the balance between success and failure is crucial in ensuring that pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. Because of this, pupils experience success more often than not, leading to very positive attitudes to learning.
- Staff are very successful at reducing the levels of pupils' anxiety. Simple initiatives such as allowing pupils and staff to 'walk a mile' at the start of the school day have a beneficial impact on reducing levels of worry, benefiting pupils' physical well-being, and preparing them emotionally for the challenges of the school day to come.
- Pupils told inspectors that adults help them to be safe in and outside school and were able to explain some of the potential dangers they may face when using the internet or social media. They appreciate the safe spaces that are available in school when they feel worried and know what to do if the fire alarm sounds.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Staff work hard to ensure that pupils' needs are met well and are skilled at anticipating and reducing situations that might trigger emotional outbursts or poor behaviour.
- Staff understand the importance of de-escalating potential incidents before they happen, and are generally successful when faced with pupils who display high levels of anxiety due to their very complex needs.
- The school's own records show a greatly reduced number of behaviour-related incidents over the last four years. It is clear that this improving situation has had a significant impact on improving outcomes for pupils.
- The school's attendance records are very impressive and compare very favourably to other schools nationally. By comparison to other special schools, Freemantles' absence rates are very low. Most pupils attend most of the time, because they truly enjoy coming to school.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Outcomes are outstanding because most pupils make exceptionally good progress from their different starting points. This is true in every phase of the school, including in the early years and sixth form.
- School leaders track pupil progress extremely well to ensure staff plan learning that takes into account pupils' needs. Individual education plans are used effectively by teachers and support staff to ensure that appropriate levels of challenge are offered in classrooms.
- Teachers constantly assess progress and adjust the levels of support and challenge they offer to pupils. Because of this, classrooms are dynamic places, where expectations are high and all pupils achieve very well.
- Most-able pupils do well at Freemantles School. Provision for pupils who are more academically able than their peers is strong because teachers and support staff understand the needs and abilities of each individual pupil very well. Extra challenge is provided when appropriate, with extension activities carefully designed so as not to cause heightened anxiety or introduce undue pressure on pupils.
- Because of their very complex needs, most pupils make very small steps of progress in reading, writing and mathematics during lessons and over time. However, for most

pupils, these small steps represent exceptional progress when their different starting points and severe and complex needs are taken into consideration.

- Tracking the progress of pupils from different vulnerable groups is a priority for the school. The very few pupils who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, including those the school considers to be most-able, do very well, because school leaders ensure that their needs are met well.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children get off to an excellent start at Freemantles. Parents were particularly vocal about the 'amazing' introduction their children had experienced when starting at the school in September. Parents who now have children in Year 1 were also keen to confirm to inspectors that their children had made 'astounding' progress in the Reception Year.
- The early years phase is well led, with senior and middle leaders working in a cohesive and effective way to ensure that staff are well prepared to provide for young children with such complex needs. Consequently, the transition into school is successful with children making very good progress from an early stage.
- Because teachers and support staff know the children well, they are able to plan activities that are well suited to each individual child's needs. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed from an early stage and given a particular focus to take advantage of the initial surge in progress experienced by children when joining the school.
- Daily routines and procedures are well established from the outset and ensure that children feel safe and secure in their new surroundings. Communication between staff and parents is very strong. Parents told inspectors that they appreciate the work that staff put in to ensure their children are happy. They were also clear that they feel that staff really understand their children and the individual complex needs they have.
- Children are safe in the early years phase. Their pastoral needs are met well by dedicated staff who ensure that every child's social and emotional development is given the highest priority. Because of this, children thrive and quickly begin to make outstanding progress from their different starting points.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- Students do very well in the sixth form due to the high quality of provision. Senior and middle leaders ensure that expectations are high, and that students understand that being a member of the sixth form brings extra levels of responsibility.
- Attitudes to learning are very well developed by the time students reach the sixth form. Generally, students display greater levels of maturity and independence, although many still require very high levels of support to access learning.
- The curriculum is individualised and tailored to meet the very specific needs of each student. Because of this, students continue to make the excellent progress seen across the rest of the school.
- Students who are academically most-able do very well. While English and mathematics continue to be taught at a functional level, many students display particular aptitudes for different aspects of their learning, including the ability to read with a high degree of

accuracy for instance. Staff are skilled at getting students to express their own feelings and opinions when discussing their work, adding to students' growing levels of confidence while also extending their understanding.

- During the inspection, one group of students rehearsed their own play script in preparation for a performance later this term. Pantomime humour, pathos, and brilliant comic timing were all apparent. Students sang duets and performed as soloists to great acclaim from their teachers and peers. Above all, they displayed a growing confidence and supported and encouraged each other with genuine delight.
- Careers education and guidance is delivered in a sensitive manner by members of staff and the local authority, who ensure a degree of independent advice. Work experience is meaningful and supports students who benefit from placements that develop their life and communication skills, encourage independence, and build confidence.
- Most students leave the school and progress into further education, including local mainstream colleges, or move into local authority social care. Transition arrangements are very well developed and bespoke in nature.

School details

Unique reference number	125477
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10003559

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.

Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	141
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	26
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Williams
Headteacher	Justin Price
Telephone number	01483 545 680
Website	http://www.freemantles.surrey.sch.uk
Email address	info@freemantles.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 November 2012

Information about this school

- Freemantles School caters for children and young people with complex social and communication needs. Many of the pupils also have autism. All have an education, health and care plan.
- The school caters for children and young people in the age range four to 19. There are currently 141 on the school roll. Numbers in each year group are small, typically nine in each year group.
- A lower than average number of pupils come from minority ethnic groups. A very small number of pupils are from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- The school uses no alternative provision at this time.
- The school provides specialist outreach support to other local schools in partnership with the local authority.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across all key stages and year groups, including the early years and sixth form. All observations were accompanied by school leaders.
- Meetings were held with pupils, parents, the headteacher, other school leaders, teachers, support staff, and the chair of governors, accompanied by one other governor.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work, heard pupils read and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account 67 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff using the online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including those regarding safeguarding, attendance, minutes of meetings of the governing body, information about pupils' outcomes provided by the school, the school's self-evaluation of its own performance, the school's development planning, and records of visits by the local authority.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Hilary Goddard

Ofsted Inspector

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