

Freebrough Academy

Linden Road, Brotton, Saltburn-By-the-Sea, Cleveland TS12 2SJ

Inspection dates

17–18 April 2018

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Over time, pupils' progress from their different starting points is very poor in a number of subjects. In 2017, pupils' progress was significantly below the national average in English, mathematics, science and humanities.
- The progress of the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils is inadequate. In many subjects, they continue to make extremely weak progress.
- Leaders, including governors and trustees, have been unable to halt the decline in the quality of education that pupils receive. A significant minority of parents, carers and staff believe that the school is not as good as it used to be.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is far too variable. Teachers do not consider pupils' starting points well enough. They often set work which is too easy, for example, covering ground from primary school that does not stretch or challenge pupils. Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment do not consistently identify the substantial problems that exist.
- Safeguarding is not effective. Procedures to confirm the whereabouts of pupils who attend alternative provision are not fit for purpose; Leaders are unsure where pupils are for extended periods of time.
- Attendance rates are below average overall and for most pupil groups. Pupils are more likely to be persistently absent than others nationally, especially disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. This is characterised by above-average rates of fixed-term exclusions and low-level disruption in a large majority of lessons. Systems to deal with disruptive behaviour are not used consistently and have limited success. Instances of bullying are not rare.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' understanding and progress is inaccurate. There is little correlation between pupils' assessment grades and the progress they make.

The school has the following strengths

- The progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in the 'platinum' groups is improving. Teaching is personalised and meets pupils' varying needs more effectively.
- Careers education is strong. Pupils receive a wide range of impartial advice and guidance. The proportion of pupils who progress to further education, training or employment is high.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve safeguarding procedures in school by ensuring that:
 - leaders regularly monitor the attendance and whereabouts of pupils who attend alternative provision
 - attendance registers are accurately maintained
 - leaders act quickly to find suitable alternative courses for pupils if/when current arrangements cease.
- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching, learning and assessment, especially in English, mathematics, science and humanities by:
 - ensuring that the work pupils complete builds on their prior knowledge and understanding
 - urgently raising teachers' expectations so that all pupils are challenged appropriately
 - introducing systems to ensure that absent pupils catch up on their return to school
 - ensuring that teachers' assessment is rooted in firm evidence to accurately reflect the progress pupils make
 - reviewing schemes of work to ensure that pupils are given sufficient time to explore topics in detail
 - clarifying expectations of teachers and pupils in relation to the completion of pupils' homework.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management so that all pupils, including pupils who are disadvantaged or have SEN and/or disabilities, make at least good progress from their starting points by ensuring that:
 - staffing instability is reduced considerably
 - leaders conduct routine checks on the accuracy of assessment
 - the actions of leaders, including governors and the multi-academy trust (the trust), do not negatively impact on the school's effectiveness for the benefit of the trust
 - leaders accurately evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - staff consistently apply school behaviour and assessment policies.
- Urgently improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:

- ensuring that pupils attend school more often and persistent absenteeism decreases, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
- reviewing the curriculum for all pupils who attend alternative provision so that courses meet their needs
- reducing staff inconsistencies in the application of the behaviour management policy
- raising teacher expectations in relation to acceptable standards of pupil behaviour
- significantly reducing the proportion of pupils who are internally and externally excluded for a fixed period
- addressing the increasing number of bullying incidents in school
- ensuring that all pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and consistently show respect to others and the school site.

External reviews of governance and of the use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders of the school and the trust have been unable to halt a dramatic decline in educational standards over the last two years. A significant minority of staff agree. Approximately one third of respondents to Ofsted's staff inspection questionnaire said that the school is now worse than when it was last inspected.
- Over time, leaders have failed to recruit subject-specialist teachers in a number of areas. For example, pupils have been without a permanent modern foreign languages teacher for nearly two years. In addition, some Year 9 pupils have had 10 different mathematics teachers since starting school in Year 7. When vacancies remain unfilled, leaders ask non-specialist teachers to step in or appoint a number of supply teachers. Pupils and parents told inspectors that the lack of continuity and specialist support is particularly frustrating.
- Recently, leaders of the trust transferred some key members of the senior leadership team to work elsewhere in the trust. This has significantly limited the capacity of the school to improve and, in many respects, had a detrimental effect. The trust acknowledges that it underestimated the negative impact this would have on the effectiveness of the school. Subsequent attempts by the trust to provide additional support have lacked the necessary rigour and impact.
- Leaders have an overgenerous view of the effectiveness of the school. For example, leaders believe that pupils' behaviour is improving, as the proportion of pupils who are excluded for a fixed period has declined this year. In reality, leaders are excluding pupils internally, and the underlying issues around pupils' behaviour remain. Consequently, leaders' plans to improve the quality of provision do not always focus on aspects of the school's work that need the most improvement.
- Leaders have been unable to ensure that all staff follow school policies in a consistent way. During the inspection, inspectors observed varying approaches to behaviour management. Pupils recognise that teachers' behaviour expectations can differ. Some pupils told inspectors that this hinders their learning. For example, one pupil said that some teachers need to be 'stricter'.
- Systems to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are inaccurate and lack depth. Leaders agree that their observations in classrooms and monitoring activities simply provide a 'snap-shot' of the quality of teaching and learning at any given time. Currently, leaders' evaluations give little consideration to the progress pupils make over time and/or the impact of teaching on the learning of the pupils.
- Pupils in need of support do not always receive it. This is because processes to ensure that teachers assess pupils' work accurately are not carried out with sufficient rigour. Although leaders and teachers regularly discuss pupils' progress, leaders do not ensure that teachers' assessment is accurate. As a result, strategies to support pupils are sometimes misdirected.
- The curriculum does not develop all pupils' knowledge, skills and values in the way in which it is designed to. Recently, too many pupils have been referred to alternative provision. For some pupils, this 'fresh start' and tailored curriculum provide them with

the impetus to do well. However, for other pupils, alternative provision acts as neither a short-term fix nor a long-term solution. Consequently, some pupils fail to attend or their standards of behaviour decline. When this occurs, leaders do not have a suitable solution, and some pupils are left in limbo and do not attend either school or alternative provision.

- Leaders allocate funds to support disadvantaged pupils in a range of ways and hold weekly meetings with staff to discuss the impact of them. However, over time, disadvantaged pupils make progress that is considerably lower than that of others nationally.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Activities and projects such as the 'school parliament' help pupils to develop their understanding of democracy and the rule of law. Pupils can, when appropriately challenged and supported, discuss ideas in a mature way.
- It is recommended that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not ensured that school systems designed to keep pupils safe are fit for purpose. As a result, significant weaknesses exist relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- Governors are unsure of the process or outcomes of performance management for staff other than the principal. As a result, they are unable to review the quality and impact of teaching in the school.
- Minutes from governing body meetings demonstrate that governors ask searching questions of leaders. However, in the past they have been too accepting of the answers they receive. Governors also believe that the quality of education that pupils receive is better than it actually is. More recently, they have recognised that to hold leaders accountable they require additional information from a wider range of sources.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Inspectors found numerous discrepancies in the school's recording of pupils' attendance for those who attend alternative provision. This cast doubt on whether the school always knows where pupils are. Leaders told inspectors that some pupils are expected to work at home because their placement at other providers has 'broken down'. In discussion, leaders accepted that they could not accurately account for the whereabouts of all pupils during school hours.
- Pupils said that they feel safe in school. They are provided with a range of opportunities to learn how to stay safe through assemblies, discussions in tutorial lessons and visiting speakers. However, behaviour logs highlight an increasing number of incidents linked to inappropriate use of social media and e-safety.
- Staff receive regular training to ensure that they are aware of the risks pupils may face. Procedures to refer concerns to senior staff with responsibility for safeguarding are clear and understood by all staff.

- Appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils. Leadership of this aspect is strong.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies greatly across the school. Too often, pupils are let down because their learning journey stops, starts or goes slowly, when a new supply teacher arrives or an established teacher leaves. As a result, the progress pupils make in a wide range of subjects is inadequate, including in English, mathematics, science, and humanities.
- Teachers do not always provide suitable learning activities that sufficiently challenge pupils. Too often, teachers ask pupils to complete tasks and study topics that they have already completed in primary schools. For example, in a Year 7 history lesson, pupils were observed describing the main features of a Norman castle. The pupils who talked to the inspector said that they had knowledge of this topic from when they were in Year 4.
- A significant majority of teachers do not follow the school's assessment policy. Furthermore, there is little correlation between the grades many pupils receive at the end of each assessment and the quality of the written work in their books.
- Teachers rarely provide pupils with the opportunity to investigate or explore subject matter in significant detail. This is particularly true for pupils in key stage 3. Many pupils are unaware that they are capable of much more. For example, in geography, pupils spent too much time repeating work on four-figure grid references. They did not move onto more complex aspects of map reading or learn how to apply these skills in real situations.
- Low-level disruption is a common feature in many lessons. Some teachers' expectations are lower than they should be and, as a result, negative pupil attitudes to learning go unchallenged. Occasionally, teachers make repeated requests for compliance to no avail. This prevents pupils from making the progress they should over time.
- Leaders acknowledge that teachers do not always use homework to enhance pupils' learning as outlined in the school's homework policy. During discussions with inspectors, pupils said that only the most able pupils are assigned homework. Inspection evidence demonstrates that very little homework is given to pupils and even less returned.
- In art, teachers' higher expectations and positive relationships with pupils are leading to improving rates of progress. Pupils are able to work well individually and in small groups to create work that exhibits a wide range of appropriate skills and artistic techniques. For example, in a Year 9 art lesson, pupils received excellent one-to-one support and were able to produce consistently high-quality enlargements of a structure.
- Newly qualified teachers, and those teachers who have recently qualified, appreciate the support they receive. Induction arrangements are comprehensive, and new staff receive regular coaching and training linked to school priorities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development requires improvement.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of alternative provision are infrequent and lack rigour. Consequently, some pupils experience a narrow alternative curriculum that prevents them from developing a detailed understanding of life beyond school.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe and can recognise many types of bullying. However, inspection evidence demonstrates that 46 bullying incidents have occurred so far this year. Pupils told inspectors that they do not feel safe in the toilets because other pupils smoke and some of the toilet doors do not lock.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are mixed. A high proportion of lessons are unsettled because pupils become distracted easily. Some pupils do not fully understand how to be a successful learner. Scrutiny of pupils' books highlighted that they are often allowed to produce sub-standard written work. Many pupils do not take the initiative to catch up missed work or seek advice from the teacher if they do not understand.
- Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, careers education and, increasingly, philosophy and ethics lessons provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities to explore their place in the world. Pupils said that it is acceptable to be 'different' in school. The school counsellor and visiting nurse effectively support pupils' social, emotional and health needs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Overall, school absence figures have been above average for a number of years and show no sign of improvement. Persistent absence rates continue to be above average. Disadvantaged pupils and, most notably, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, account for a large majority of absentees and persistent absentees. There are no consistent procedures to ensure that pupils catch up when they return from absence. As a result, many pupils have a large number of gaps in their work and understanding.
- Over time, the proportion of pupils who are excluded from school for a fixed period has been considerably higher than average. Currently, in the absence of a consistent approach to behaviour management, pupils' behaviour is variable and dependent on the teacher they have.
- During the inspection, pupils were observed swearing in lessons and around the school, eating in class and chewing gum. Inspectors witnessed pupils disrespecting the classroom and school environment by putting their feet up on furniture or dropping litter. In addition, some pupils were intentionally confrontational with members of staff. In more than one lesson, pupils took it on themselves to leave the classroom before the lesson had concluded. This went unchallenged by teachers.
- A large proportion of the staff who responded to Ofsted's staff inspection questionnaire said that leaders do not support staff in managing behaviour well. Staff said that some

pupils continue to misbehave because the sanctions for poor behaviour do not act as a deterrent.

- The most able pupils in key stage 4 display positive attitudes. As a result, and despite interruptions to their learning, they work well in groups and are eager to improve their work.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils make progress that is significantly below average in a number of key subjects, including English, mathematics, science and humanities. In 2016 and 2017, published performance information revealed that pupils' achievement in mathematics placed the school in the bottom 10% of schools nationally. Notwithstanding the issues with the accuracy of assessment information, leaders told inspectors that, following internal 'mock' examinations, they did not expect to see rapid improvements in the summer GCSE examinations.
- Disadvantaged pupils continue to underachieve considerably. For example, progress information in 2017 indicated that they made approximately one grade lower progress than others nationally in English, mathematics and humanities. Over time, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils from their different starting points has been below average. This is particularly true of disadvantaged pupils who enter the school with above-average levels of attainment.
- Teachers do not routinely plan learning to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers often ignore the fact that they have pupils in their class who attained very highly in primary school. Consequently, the most able pupils make poor progress because they are not pushed to achieve what they are capable of.
- The work scrutinised by inspectors indicates that current pupils' progress and attainment in many subjects, and year groups, is not good enough. Some pupils' weak literacy skills are holding them back. However, established reading programmes are beginning to improve pupils' understanding of key subject vocabulary. During the inspection, key stage 3 pupils read to inspectors. Pupils were able to recall their favourite part of the story and provide a clear rationale for the author's writing style.
- Over time, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have been let down. Their progress was consistently well below average. However, pupils in the 'platinum' groups are beginning to make significant gains in their learning. The effective and personalised support afforded to current pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities ensures that they often make more progress than their peers.
- Pupils studying work-based and vocational qualifications, including at alternative provision, make much stronger progress. These types of qualifications are well suited to their needs and future career aspirations and, as a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are more positive.
- Since the closure of post-16 provision recently, leaders have ensured that pupils receive an increased number of opportunities to investigate careers options. The school website contains a wide collection of links and articles that offer detailed advice and guidance. The proportion of pupils leaving school that go on to further education, employment or training is high.

School details

Unique reference number	136139
Local authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	10047773

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	763
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Asma Shaffi
Principal	Rachel Prentice
Telephone number	01287 676305
Website	www.freebroughacademy.org
Email address	info@freebroughacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	7–8 January 2015

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is significantly above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The school provides mathematics lessons for two post-16 students on a part-time basis.
- A new principal was appointed 18 months ago.
- Leaders of the trust took the decision to cease post-16 provision from September 2017.
- The school uses six alternative providers: Redcar and Cleveland Training, Tees Valley College, Educ8 Creative Care, Educ8 Learnfit, Archway and Evolve.

- The school is a member of Teesside Learning Trust. Responsibility for the school rests with the board of trustees. The structure of the trust's governance and management can be found on the school's website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a wide range of lessons across the school. Many of the observations in lessons were carried out with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior and subject leaders, teachers and members of the trust and governing body.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative from each of the alternative providers.
- Inspectors held informal and formal discussions with pupils and observed tutor groups and pupil interactions during social times.
- Inspectors listened to a group of Year 7 and Year 8 pupils read.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and scrutinised a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, analysis of performance information, action plans and evaluations, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding files, recruitment checks and pupils' work.
- Inspectors took into account the 67 responses from parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Sixty-six members of staff completed Ofsted's online staff survey. All of these responses were taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Lee Elliott, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Mary Lanovy-Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Garry Stout	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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