

Freehold Community Academy

Sidmouth Street, Oldham, Greater Manchester OL9 7RG

Inspection dates

25–26 September 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have worked successfully together to develop a strong ethos and culture. They have improved the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and outcomes.
- Leaders' plans for improvement allow them to effectively evaluate the impact of their work on pupils' outcomes. As a result, leaders focus on appropriate priorities.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Pupils are confident that they are safe in school. They learn how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations.
- Staff receive regular training and feedback to improve their teaching skills. As a result, the quality of teaching is good.
- Current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language, make strong progress from their starting points.
- Teachers challenge pupils appropriately during lessons so that all pupils, including the most able, make good progress.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to enable pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, to learn well alongside their peers.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Pupils are well prepared to be citizens of British society.
- Pupils' rates of attendance are above those seen nationally.
- Pupils behave extremely well in class and around school. They demonstrate exceptionally good manners.
- Children progress well in the Reception Year. Teachers and teaching assistants provide a range of activities that promote effective learning.
- The role of some middle leaders in checking on pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility is at an early stage of development.
- Pupils do not acquire the knowledge that they need in some areas of the curriculum, which limits the progress that they make in some subjects such as history.
- Although there has been a significant improvement in pupils' reading skills, their comprehension skills are not fully developed.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - continuing to strengthen the effectiveness of middle leaders, especially in subjects other than English, mathematics and science
 - ensuring that the curriculum allows pupils to develop their subject knowledge in areas other than mathematics, English and science
 - improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by further developing pupils' reading comprehension skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, local governors and the academy trust have worked together effectively to develop a strong ethos and culture. All staff contribute to enhancing the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour and outcomes.
- Senior leaders have a firm understanding of the school's priorities. They use accurate information well to ensure that the improvements made have the desired impact on pupils' outcomes. The trust and the local governing body hold leaders to account for the success of their actions.
- Staff are motivated, and they value the opportunities for professional development provided by the school and the trust. Staff make the most of opportunities to share good practice with other schools in the trust. The focus placed by leaders on effective professional development underpins the good quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school.
- Those with responsibility for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities provide good leadership. They ensure that staff receive training to meet the different needs of the pupils well. They have implemented clear procedures to identify pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They ensure that parents have regular opportunities to discuss the provision for their children. Consequently, these pupils make strong progress from their starting points.
- Leaders consider carefully any barriers to the learning of disadvantaged pupils. The additional funding for these pupils is spent well. The evaluation of previous spending of this funding is effective because targets to measure success are precise. Leaders make certain that the appropriate support is in place to enable these pupils to make strong progress.
- The primary sport premium is used effectively. This helps to provides training for teachers to improve their skills in teaching physical education. The spending plan allows precise evaluation of the impact of the funding. The funding is also used to broaden the range of sporting opportunities on offer to pupils, as well as the range of inter-school competitions that they enter.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Consequently, pupils gain a good understanding of life in modern Britain. They spoke to inspectors about what equality means to them. For example, they understand that people have lifestyles and cultures that may be different from their own, but that these should be respected. They discuss their learning with senior leaders and governors, which is resulting in more personalised learning activities.
- The majority of parents are highly supportive of the school. For example, 100% of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to others. Parents who spoke with inspectors, or responded to the online survey, typically described the school as having friendly and helpful teachers who support pupils' learning well.
- The curriculum provides a broad range of learning experiences both in and out of the classroom. Although leaders of English, mathematics and science are effective in

improving pupils' progress in their subjects, the leadership of other subjects is not as secure. Pupils do not acquire the knowledge that they need in some subjects. For example, some history topics do not allow pupils to learn sufficiently about the era studied. Leaders have redesigned the curriculum to meet the needs of current pupils in the school more effectively. However, it is too early to see the impact of these actions.

- The emphasis that leaders put on improving basic skills in reading has been successful. Pupils' progress in reading is strong, and they say that they enjoy it. Those who spoke to the inspectors said: 'Reading improves our imagination and helps us become better writers.' However, the development of the comprehension skills of some older pupils remains a priority for the school.

Governance of the school

- The trust has overall responsibility for the governance of the school. It devolves some responsibilities to a local governing body. Both the trust and the local governing body understand their different responsibilities. They provide good support for leaders in embedding a culture of high expectations.
- Members of the trust and the local governors have a clear and accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and of the further improvements that they would like to make. They make regular visits to the school to see their plans in action for themselves and to discuss aspects of the school's work with staff and pupils.
- Governors receive regular and detailed reports about the work of the school from leaders. Minutes of governors' meetings show that they ask effective questions to seek clarity and further information. Governors support and challenge school leaders appropriately.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding, underpinned by policies and systems that reflect statutory requirements. Leaders ensure that all the necessary vetting checks take place when an adult starts to work, or volunteer, at the school. Records are clear, precise and kept up to date.
- Leaders demonstrate a very strong knowledge of the local area. Staff work well together to ensure that any concerns about pupils' welfare are shared, recorded and reviewed appropriately. They know the pupils well. They make referrals to external agencies in a timely manner when required.
- Local governors keep a close eye on the school's safeguarding procedures and practices to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Relationships between adults and pupils are warm and respectful. Leaders, staff and pupils' actions and interactions embody the 'Freehold Five'. These are values of honesty, integrity, respect, empathy and resilience.
- Teachers ensure that learning is planned to engage the interest of pupils. They also

use assessment information well to ensure that learning activities are well matched to pupils' needs.

- In English, pupils' books show that teachers plan lessons sequentially so that pupils build on previous knowledge and understanding. At the start of lessons, teachers provide pupils with information about the steps that they need to take to be successful in their learning. They provide pupils with purposeful opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects. As a result, pupils gain a strong understanding of how to write in different styles and for different purposes and audiences.
- In mathematics lessons, teachers encourage pupils to draw on previous knowledge and skills to support new learning. For example, pupils use their knowledge of place value to understand more challenging addition and subtraction work. Work in pupils' books shows that teachers challenge pupils to solve problems and to develop their reasoning skills across the curriculum effectively.
- Teachers model new concepts clearly. As a result, pupils settle quickly to tasks, and they understand what they are learning. Teachers typically assess pupils' understanding of the ideas being taught during the lesson. They provide further explanations or challenge them more when necessary.
- Teaching assistants are trained well. They have a positive impact on pupils' learning. A large proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. Staff provide good-quality support for these pupils. They use well-considered questions, encouragement and praise. As a result, pupils learn well.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in English and mathematics. Work in pupils' different subject books shows that pupils write to the same high standard as they do in English lessons. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical reasoning skills and writing across a range of subjects.
- In the wider curriculum, some activities teachers provide do not allow pupils to gain the subject-specific knowledge that they need. As a result, their progress in a minority of topics is not as strong.
- Basic reading skills and phonics are taught well. Pupils at an early stage of reading use their knowledge of phonics successfully to help them read accurately. Children also use it well in their writing.
- More confident readers read fluently and with expression. However, although standards in reading are improving, some pupils lack the comprehension needed to discuss in depth the texts they are reading.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are confident and polite when interacting with adults and are kind and considerate to each other.
- Leaders have created a very cheerful and lively school. Staff are trained effectively and promote the emotional well-being of pupils extremely well. The range of provision to support the most vulnerable pupils is exceptional.
- Pupils are rightly proud of their school and celebrate its diversity enthusiastically. They are articulate in expressing their views and ideas to each other and to adults.
- Pupils develop into mature young people who are active citizens of their school community. They have a breadth of opportunities to contribute to their education, for example in regular discussions with governors and in discussion with leaders about curriculum topics.
- Pupils know that staff value them as individuals. This makes them feel safe in school. They have a strong understanding of the different forms that bullying can take. They say that it is very rare in the school, and they are confident that staff would deal with any issues swiftly should they occur.
- Pupils talk enthusiastically about how leaders have enabled them to improve their learning and about the exciting trips that they have been on. They consistently exhibit very positive attitudes to their learning and are enthusiastic when talking about their work. Many of those spoken to said that they enjoy all their lessons without exception.
- Pupils also discussed how the 'Freehold Five' values are relevant to their conduct and attitudes to learning. One pupil commented to an inspector, 'Our learning encourages us to use integrity, honesty and resilience.' This resilience helps them develop academically. For example, work seen in English books shows improvements in writing from the pupils' first draft to the final write-up.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Outstanding personal development has resulted in courteous and polite pupils. They play harmoniously together at playtime, using playground equipment safely and showing respect for each other and the school environment.
- Pupils are treated equally, and they told inspectors that there is no discrimination. Pupils from a variety of cultures get on well together because of the behaviour and positive attitudes modelled by staff. The school has very few incidents of poor behaviour, and it deals effectively with them when they occur.
- Pupils' attendance is high, and they rarely miss a day of school. There are effective systems in place to work with families to improve attendance and punctuality if needed. Consequently, very few pupils are regularly absent from school.

- Pupils spoken to feel safe in school and show that they have a very secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, for example when using the internet. They are able to talk about how the school helps them to learn about keeping safe within the community.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over the past two years, the proportion of pupils attaining the national average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 has been below national averages. However, provisional results for 2018 show that pupils' attainment in mathematics was in line with the national average and that attainment in writing was above it. Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics also improved, and was in line with the national average in 2018.
- Pupils' progress in reading at key stage 2 has been below the national average for the past three years. However, provisional assessment information for reading shows significant improvement in 2018 on previous years at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Current pupils make strong progress in reading, developing fluency and expression. However, some pupils' progress is limited by their lack of comprehension of the books that they are reading.
- Challenges in mathematics lessons deepen pupils' thinking and help them to apply their knowledge to a range of problem-solving activities. As a result, progress in mathematics is strong for pupils in classes throughout the school.
- In writing, pupils develop stamina. They match work well to pupils' needs. Current pupils meet the school's high expectations of writing. An increasing number of pupils exceed this expectation.
- In science, pupils develop a secure understanding through different types of scientific enquiry. This helps them to answer scientific questions about the world around them. They master the investigative skills that underpin scientific knowledge. Teachers' expectations of the use of literacy and mathematics skills are also high in science. As a result, current pupils make strong progress.
- A high proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because staff make effective provision for the individual needs of these pupils.
- Pupils' books show that disadvantaged pupils and pupils who speak English as an additional language make strong progress in both English and mathematics from their individual starting points. Work challenges the most able pupils so that this group makes strong progress.
- Well-developed early reading skills result in pupils making secure progress in phonics across the early years and key stage 1. The proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the phonics reading check in Year 1 has been in line with the national average for three years.
- Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that pupils do not gain the subject-specific knowledge that they require in a minority of subjects across the curriculum. This is because activities do not always develop the understanding that they need to make strong progress.

Early years provision

Good

- Children start both the Nursery and Reception years with skills and knowledge below what is typical for their age. They make good progress in Reception so that by the end of the year, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is typically close to the national average. In 2018, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development dipped. This is because a significant number of children in this class had particularly complex needs. However, from low starting points, children made strong progress.
- The leadership of early years is effective. Leaders have ensured that additional funding has been used to good effect. Consequently, disadvantaged children and those who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points.
- The early years leader has high expectations and provides good direction for the assessment and planning of activities to meet children's different developmental needs. Adults share her enthusiasm and commitment to providing the best start for the children's education. This, combined with good teaching, ensures that children achieve well across all areas of learning.
- Clear systems and routines help children to settle quickly. Adults establish positive relationships with children, and children feel safe and confident. Behaviour is good and children are happy to follow instructions and to share and take turns. Adults show a high level of care for the children. They receive appropriate training to keep them safe, including paediatric first aid training.
- Reception staff develop children's communication skills well. They narrate children's actions as they play, feeding in language that might be used later.
- Children benefit from a well-organised environment where they are encouraged to be active, curious and independent. They sustain high levels of concentration when working in groups or on their own.
- Training has helped adults to respond to children's interests, while ensuring that they apply their basic skills. This is because teachers use assessment effectively to match learning activities to abilities. For example, one group used mathematical resources to improve their learning about shapes.
- Teachers work closely with parents to help them share their children's learning experiences at home. Teachers use this information to review children's development needs. They plan individual activities that build on their growing interests and skills. This helps all groups of children, including those who are disadvantaged, to make good progress.
- Teaching in the Nursery provides children with interesting and challenging learning experiences. Staff ensure that activities are sufficiently challenging. For example, children were curious and used newly learned vocabulary when discussing making a pretend microphone. As a result of the stimulating curriculum, children in Nursery make good progress.

School details

Unique reference number	142425
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10053483

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	461
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Keith Lowe
Principal	Mrs Angela Leach
Telephone number	0161 770 5725
Website	www.freeholdprimaryacademy.co.uk
Email address	freehold@focus-trust.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Freehold Community Academy opened in November 2015. It forms part of the Focus-Trust.
- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is also higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Half of the current Year 6 pupils attended a residential visit during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school, sometimes with leaders.
- Inspectors and leaders reviewed a wide range of work in pupils' books. Inspectors looked at pupils' work during lessons and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and with members of the local governing body. Documents relating to local governance were reviewed. A meeting was held with the chief executive officer and representatives of the trust. Inspectors also reviewed minutes of meetings of the local governing body.
- Parents' views were considered through the nine responses to Parent View and in conversations with parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Groups of pupils read to the inspectors. Inspectors also heard pupils read during visits to classrooms, and they talked with pupils about their attitudes to reading.
- Pupils' views were heard through conversations with inspectors at breaktime and around the school. Inspectors also considered 17 responses to the online pupil survey. They met groups of staff and considered 43 online survey responses from them.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documents, including those relating to school improvement and how additional funds for disadvantaged pupils are allocated. They also evaluated information relating to pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records and the central record of recruitment checks.

Inspection team

Simon Hunter, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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