

Inspection of Bristol Free School

Concorde Drive, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol BS10 6NJ

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 March 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending school. They feel safe and say that bullying is rare. If bullying does happen, pupils trust staff to deal with it promptly.

Pupils know how to behave well, and they do so. They say that sanctions are not often needed and that they are rewarded for behaving well. Most pupils feel that staff treat them fairly. Movement between lessons and social times is calm and orderly.

Pupils appreciate the range of clubs and development opportunities that many take part in. For example, there are music clubs, sporting activities and a 'Pride' group. Pupils value the information they receive about their next steps in education or into employment or apprenticeships. Sixth-form students move on to appropriate destinations, with a large proportion going on to university.

Most pupils are keen to take part in lessons, and work hard. They cooperate with each other and enjoy taking part in discussions and presentations.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. The curriculum is designed to build knowledge over time. It helps pupils remember what they learn. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is engaging for pupils, and that it promotes diversity. For example, in English, history and art, pupils now learn more about different cultures and read the work of authors from a range of backgrounds.

Teaching focuses on what pupils need to know and do. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and are keen to share this with pupils. They know their pupils well and use this knowledge to help them learn. Teachers use assessment well to help pupils improve their work. Most teaching supports pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) but sometimes it is not precise enough. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not make as much progress as they could. Some parents who have a child with SEND do not feel that the school is always meeting their needs.

Leaders understand the importance of reading for learning well in all school subjects. Those pupils who have fallen behind with their reading receive the support they need to catch up. Students in the sixth form read to extend their knowledge beyond the subjects they study. They also have opportunities to support younger pupils with their reading.

Leaders know where learning gaps have developed as a result of the pandemic and have adapted the curriculum accordingly. Changes made to the curriculum studied by some pupils enable them to make greater progress.

Pupils behave well. There is rarely any disruption to learning. Leaders support those who behave less well to reduce incidents over time. They identify and tackle the causes of poor behaviour of individuals and groups.

Promoting pupils' personal development is very important to school leaders. The personal, social, health and economic education curriculum is well planned. Students in the sixth form are particularly positive about the ways in which the school helps to prepare them for life in modern Britain. However, some pupils do not show enough tolerance or understanding of pupils from different backgrounds. They sometimes use discriminatory language which makes their peers uncomfortable.

Leaders have committed to providing all pupils with experiences, such as visits to the theatre or sporting activities, to help them to develop beyond their academic studies. They are developing a core offer so that all pupils and parents know what opportunities the school will provide.

The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. The careers programme prepares pupils well for their next stages in education or employment. Sixth-form students have good support from knowledgeable staff, who help them apply for university places.

Trustees and the local governing body know the school well. They support and challenge leaders to bring about improvements. Staff say that leaders support them well and consider their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know how to refer any concerns they may have. They have regular training to ensure that they recognise signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. Leaders are responsive to changes in the types of concern that are reported. For example, relevant staff have had training so that they can help the increased number of pupils who are experiencing poor mental health. Staff are tenacious in securing the support pupils need from other services and in building strong relationships with families.

Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on all adults working in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The support that some pupils with SEND receive is not always tailored to meet their individual needs. This means that they do not always make the progress they should. Leaders should ensure that teaching is adapted to meet the needs of pupils.
- A small number of pupils use discriminatory language on occasion. This upsets their peers. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum is effective in preparing all pupils for life in modern Britain so that incidents of this nature reduce.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	136822
Local authority	Bristol City of
Inspection number	10211724
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1138
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	149
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Karen Lynch
Headteacher	Susan King
Website	www.bristolfreeschool.org.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses three alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, leaders of curriculum areas, teachers, the special educational needs coordinator and trustees.

- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: English, languages, science, art and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the views of staff and pupils in Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Sarah Favager-Dalton, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Lovett	Ofsted Inspector
Will Morgan	Ofsted Inspector
Jerry Giles	Ofsted Inspector
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