

Inspection of a good school: Freehold Community Academy

Sidmouth Street, Oldham, Greater Manchester OL9 7RG

Inspection dates: 31 October and 1 November 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Nicola Maher. This school is part of Focus Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Helen Rowland, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Spencer.

What is it like to attend this school?

Freehold Community Academy is a special place in which to learn. Pupils are happy, and they thrive at this school. This is because pupils know that they have a voice and that staff will listen to them if they have any concerns.

The school provides a highly ambitious curriculum which equips pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), with the knowledge and cultural experiences that they need to achieve exceptionally well. Staff expect the best of pupils. Pupils are eager to learn new things. They spoke enthusiastically about their learning and all that the school has to offer.

From the early years, staff forge positive relationships with pupils. The school expects pupils to behave well, and they do. Pupils are polite and courteous to staff, to their friends and to visitors. The school's values of honesty, resilience, respect, integrity and empathy are consistently modelled by pupils and staff in their everyday actions.

Through the school's 'Freehold 50 Pledge', pupils benefit from a vast array of opportunities to enhance their learning of the curriculum. These opportunities include a wide variety of experiences that support pupils to develop confidence and resilience, alongside making a difference to the school and the local community. For example, pupils visit local landmarks and contribute to the community by creating sensory gardens and supporting charities.

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

The school has designed an exciting and aspirational curriculum for pupils which starts when children join the early years. The school has meticulously defined the knowledge and skills that pupils should learn in each subject. Staff have thought carefully about the order in which pupils should learn this knowledge. This helps pupils to develop and deepen their understanding of concepts over time.

Pupils remember in depth what they have learned. They were eager to talk about this knowledge with the inspector. For example, younger pupils explained how to add and take away 10, while older pupils described how volcanoes are formed and what happens when they erupt. Pupils readily recall earlier learning. Across the curriculum, they use and apply their prior knowledge to more sophisticated ideas successfully.

The school carefully assesses how well pupils learn in each subject. This enables teachers to swiftly identify and address pupils' misconceptions. Added to this, teachers are adept at using assessment information to shape new learning. Pupils, including those with SEND, are extremely well prepared for secondary school.

Children make a strong start to learning in the Nursery class. Many children speak English as an additional language. It is a priority for the school that children develop their language and communication quickly. Across the early years, staff are highly skilled at designing learning that enables pupils to be ready for the demands of Year 1.

The school understands that teaching pupils to read is critical to their future success. Children start to learn phonics when they begin school. Staff have effective, regular training which supports them to deliver the phonics programme with expertise. Books are well matched to the sounds that pupils have learned. Staff ensure that pupils receive well-tailored support which helps them if they are finding reading more difficult.

Staff use a range of appropriate strategies to foster a love of reading among pupils. For example, pupils have access to a wealth of diverse texts that reflect different cultures and different types of families. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about these books and others that they have read independently. Pupils also told the inspector that they enjoy writing to their favourite authors and that they are very excited when they receive a reply.

Staff quickly and accurately identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. The school makes sure that staff understand the individual needs of pupils. Staff are ambitious for these pupils, and they ensure that pupils with SEND successfully learn the same curriculum as their peers.

Pupils' behaviour is impeccable in lessons and when moving around the school. Routines are well embedded from when children join the Nursery class. Staff apply the school's systems fairly and consistently well.

Pupils learn about the importance of respect for everyone, including themselves. Pupils value being able to relay their opinions to staff about how the school is run and what they would like to see happening in the future. The school takes advantage of every

opportunity to promote pupils' wider personal development. For example, pupils sing at local care homes and organise events in school to celebrate the beliefs and cultures of others. Staff ensure that pupils engage with diverse and meaningful experiences before they leave the school. These experiences include visiting a city, having an ice cream at a beach and learning to ride a bike. The school ensures that disadvantaged pupils make the best use of these encounters.

The local governing body works closely with the board of trustees to hold the school to account effectively. Those responsible for governance have a clear oversight of the work of the school.

Staff are proud to work at the school and said that leaders are considerate of their workload when making decisions about the quality of education that pupils receive. Leaders, and the trust, ensure that there are regular, high-quality professional development opportunities, which staff appreciate.

Parents and carers are very positive about the school and the education that it provides. For example, they praised how well the school communicates with them about what their children have been learning. This helps parents to better support their children at home.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2018.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	142425
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	10294390
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	475
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Spencer
CEO of the trust	Helen Rowland
Headteacher	Nicola Maher
Website	www.freeholdprimaryacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	25 and 26 September 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Focus Academy Trust.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school provides a before-school club for all pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and members of staff. They also met with members of the governing body and trustees, including the chair of the local governing board and the chair of the board of trustees.
- The inspector spoke to groups of pupils about their experiences of school.

- The inspector reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation document, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and trustee meetings, and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, she discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subject areas.
- The inspector considered the views of parents through the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- The inspector considered the views of pupils and staff through discussions and through the information collected from Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Rebecca Sharples, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023