

Inspection of a good school: Sir Thomas Fremantle School

Buckingham Road, Winslow, Buckinghamshire MK18 3GH

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 May 2024

Outcome

Sir Thomas Fremantle School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Francis Murphy. This school is a single-academy trust. The school is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sarah Driscoll.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's new vision is underpinned by an inclusive ethos and ambition for all. Whilst this marks a change in direction for some parts of the school community, overall, parents, carers and pupils can see the improvements taking place at the school. Indeed, many pupils value these changes highly and are keen to contribute to further developments. The impressive School Council members are excellent examples of this.

The school's 'RISE' values (Resilience, Integrity, Success, Empathy) are understood and embraced by most pupils who are proud of their school. Overall, most behaviour in lessons and around the school is positive and there are respectful relationships between pupils and with staff. Pupils are happy and welcoming. They feel safe and understand that bullying is not tolerated. They know how to report any incidents, and trust staff to address them.

Recent curriculum developments have increased the range of subject options. For example, at key stage 4, alongside the English Baccalaureate subjects, pupils can study different creative and vocational courses. Most pupils experience high-quality teaching. They are achieving increasingly well, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, the most refined curriculum thinking is not yet fully embedded across the whole school.

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

In most areas, the curriculum is thoughtfully sequenced so that knowledge and skills build over time. Most teachers introduce new content clearly and select activities which help pupils to remember and apply their learning. The school identifies clearly any needs individual pupils may have and how to support them. This helps teachers adapt approaches effectively. Most teachers check understanding regularly and provide pupils

with useful feedback to encourage them to develop their thinking. For example, in mathematics pupils' verbal answers are frequently well-reasoned. However, the delivery of the curriculum is variable and sometimes teachers' expectations of what pupils can do could be higher, particularly regarding written work and in key stage 3. Consequently, while most pupils produce work of an expected standard or better, including pupils with SEND, some pupils could achieve more.

The school has a carefully considered literacy strategy. Pupils are exposed to diverse and ambitious texts during tutor sessions and through their subjects. For pupils who need help with reading, staff identify their gaps accurately. Support is then targeted for each pupil, so they catch up quickly.

Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and attendance in line with the school's new values. The school has acted decisively to strengthen behaviour approaches and routines, as well as attendance management. It has also responded robustly to particular issues such as vaping. Pupils and staff recognise the improvements as a result. Most pupils attend regularly and behave well in lessons and social time. Strategies to support pupils who struggle to attend are positive. The new inclusion areas, and more nuanced approaches used there, are particularly effective in helping individuals manage their behaviour and emotions. However, behaviour management is not always consistent and the conduct and language of a small number of pupils can sometimes fall below expectations.

The school's personal development programme is thorough and undergoing further review. Pupils learn how to navigate real and online worlds and relationships. They also explore diversity and social issues such as homelessness. The school's careers provision benefits from a wide range of partners from the world of work, education and training. Consequently, pupils are very well prepared for their next steps. To enable pupils to explore talents and interests, the school offers an increasing range of clubs and trips. Staff take care to ensure that personal development, careers and extra-curricular activities are accessible to all.

The trustees have been integral in deciding the school's new strategic direction. They provide strong support and challenge to the school and discharge their statutory duties diligently. Leaders and governors are very mindful of staff workload and wellbeing, especially in this period of change. Staff acknowledge this and are very proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some areas, and for some pupils, the school's highest levels of curriculum thinking are not fully embedded. Consequently, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could, especially in terms of their written work and in key stage 3. The school should continue to support all teachers to be able to deliver the curriculum so that all pupils achieve as highly as they can.
- Sometimes the school's routines and behaviour approaches are not used as consistently as they could be. This means that a small number of pupils do not meet the school's high expectations for behaviour. As a result, this small group do not show the same levels of respect for others or for the values of the school as the majority do. The school should continue to refine its behaviour and inclusion approaches, to help all staff understand all pupils' behaviours, and manage them effectively.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2015.

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	139663
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10321974
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	598
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Driscoll
Headteacher	Francis Murphy
Website	www.sirthomasfremantle.org
Date(s) of previous inspection	11 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider and two unregistered providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 8 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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders of the school and trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, geography, history and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, published information about pupils' performance and minutes of trustees' and governors' meetings.
- Inspectors spoke to a wide range of pupils and observed their behaviour in lessons and at social times.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including freetext responses. They also took account of the responses to the staff and pupil surveys and gathered the views of parents, staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Mary Davies, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Paul James

Ofsted Inspector

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