



# Freemantles School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 125477  
**Local Authority** Surrey  
**Inspection number** 293275  
**Inspection dates** 25–26 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Melvyn Blackband

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Pycroft Road
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Chertsey
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–16		KT16 9ER
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01932 563460
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	92	<b>Fax number</b>	01932 569679
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr R Enticott
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs S Stephens
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 January 2003		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Freemantles is a community special school for pupils with autism. Until 2001 the school provided for primary aged children but is now expanding to accept secondary and post 16 pupils. Almost a third of the school population is of secondary age. A new school is being built to replace the overcrowded accommodation. Several staff are new to the school. The pupils are almost exclusively White British and a below average proportion are eligible for free school meals.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Freemantles has accurately evaluated itself as a good school. The school is well led and managed. The head teacher, who is new in post, has clearly identified the school's priorities and she is supported by a committed and enthusiastic senior team, who are making a difference to the pupils' social and academic development. The school is well aware of its strengths and weaknesses and is realistic and accurate in the evaluation of its provision. As a result of this purposeful leadership the pupils enjoy being there and they make outstanding progress in their personal development. Because of the good care, support and guidance, parents are very happy for their children to attend, knowing they will be safe, free from bullying and intimidation and are making good progress. As one parent commented, 'I just don't know what we would do without Freemantles'.

The standards reached by pupils are substantially below national averages because of their learning difficulties but all pupils, including those in the Foundation Stage make good progress, particularly in their social development. Achievement throughout the school is good as pupils benefit from good teaching. Although several teachers are new to the school, their work has been very well supported by senior more experienced staff. Every established teacher has developed a good knowledge of specific techniques used to teach children with autism. The pupils are very well supported by competent teaching assistants. The school's monitoring of achievement is mostly effective although the teachers are less consistent in the way they record the small steps in pupils' learning.

There has been good improvement since the previous inspection and success in several areas illustrates that there is a good capacity to improve further. There is an interesting and wide range of learning activities which have been successfully adapted to take account of the pupils' learning needs. The good curriculum has been significantly improved since the previous inspection. There is an exceptional range of extra activities which take pupils out into the community and encourages their independence and self confidence in unfamiliar surroundings. Pupils are well supported since staff are skilled in using strategies which help pupils to cope with the barriers to learning caused by their autism. The pupils have a clear understanding of their behaviour targets and make good progress in achieving them. However, the guidance given to pupils to help them understand how to improve their work is inconsistent.

The school's finances are well managed and daily routines are efficient. The school gives good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Provide better and more consistent academic guidance for pupils so that they are sure about the next small steps in their learning.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards of attainment are low because of the pupils' learning difficulties, but pupils of all ages achieve well. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress especially in their personal, social and emotional development. Good assessment and secure strategies for measuring and tracking pupils' progress lead to realistic expectation of what pupils can achieve. These systems enable teachers to ensure no individual or group is underperforming. Assessments are compared nationally with similar schools and form a sound basis for monitoring the curriculum and teaching strategies. The recording of each small step in learning is however inconsistent. This affects the teachers' ability to plan detailed learning objectives.

Results show that pupils meet challenging personal development targets. The pupils make particularly good progress in their oral communication, supported by the appropriate use of specific techniques such as the Picture Exchange Communication System, (PECS). Pupils throughout the school make good progress in literacy and numeracy.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils are very well behaved. This reflects the school's very careful management of each child's behaviour and the emphasis placed on moral and social development. When pupils become agitated or display challenging behaviour the staff make good use of behaviour plans, and of appropriate symbols to guide and support the pupils. The school is characterised by the calm approach of all staff. Pupils work and play happily because they know what is expected from them.

Pupils make excellent progress in their spiritual development through a range of sensory activities. Their moral and social understanding is very good and is enhanced through the use of symbols and through an exemplary range of social activities in which pupils are led to understand the impact of their actions. The pupils develop good knowledge of other cultures through the celebration of differences within school.

The pupils feel safe and report no bullying or intimidation. They are helped to make sense of relationships through very good provision for personal, health and social education. Older pupils learn about sex and relationships and all pupils eat healthily and take part in physical activity. Their progress in literacy and numeracy helps to prepare them satisfactorily for adult life. Attendance is excellent. Parents feel very positive about the school's support for them and their children's well being. Many parents would endorse the comments that, 'the support...and understanding... have been brilliant' and that, 'We feel like partners in the education process'.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, including the Foundation Department. Parents work effectively with teachers to support their children's learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and there is growing expertise amongst new and established staff in specialised teaching techniques and the use of symbols. Teachers know their pupils very well and this helps them plan work for individual pupils. The knowledgeable teaching assistants support teachers and pupils effectively. For instance in a Year 4 lesson a boy displaying extremely challenging behaviour was patiently helped by a teaching assistant who managed to calm him and interest him in a story.

The pupils like and respect their teachers and so work hard. Teachers manage behaviour very well and successfully maintain a calm and stress free classroom atmosphere through their expertise in creating clearly structured learning activities. These factors enable pupils to work with increased levels of concentration and help them to enjoy their lessons. They contribute much to pupils' success, as they are generally free from the anxieties and frustrations associated with their disability. The way that teachers record the small steps in pupils' learning is not as effective as the real success they have in meeting pupils' social and emotional needs.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy purposeful and interesting activities which are well adapted to meet their learning needs. The curriculum is carefully monitored by senior staff and checks are made to make sure it is relevant for all age groups. Pupils in the primary department, including Foundation Stage children, follow appropriate topic based programmes. Vocational programmes for older pupils are becoming established although the provision for work related learning and economic understanding remains undeveloped.

Provision for teaching literacy and numeracy is effective because the school makes good use of national strategies to add rigour to the planning. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good and underpinned by clear assessment of pupils' achievements. There is a wide range of activities to take pupils out of the classroom, teaching them about the community and that new things can be learned in a variety of circumstances. Pupils derive much benefit from an extensive programme of visits and residential trips which support their personal development very well.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Health and safety are carefully monitored. Child protection procedures are effective and regularly reviewed and staff training updated. Necessary checks on staff are

efficient and appropriately recorded. The school's procedures for pupils' care and wellbeing are very good and this makes a significant contribution to the pupils' enjoyment and achievement. The pupils and their families receive excellent support. There is good support for pupils to improve their behaviour although there is less consistency in making them aware of how well they are doing academically in lessons. The school ensures pupils understand the value of a healthy lifestyle and of keeping themselves safe. There are very good procedures for preparing pupils for the next stage in their education.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's leadership has established a safe structured environment which provides good support for pupils and their families and which promotes good progress in terms of pupils' core skills and personal development. The headteacher maintains a strong commitment to school improvement. She is supported by an able deputy and a relatively inexperienced but enthusiastic senior team which is growing in effectiveness. These staff have been successfully inducted into their new roles through well chosen training opportunities. The governing body, led by an energetic chairman, has a good knowledge of the school and is both supportive and holds the leadership to account.

Parents feel involved and valued and they have a very high regard for the school. Communication within the school and with parents is excellent. Staff feel consulted and their views heard. The quality of professional training is very good and is suitably focused, particularly for new teachers, on aspects of provision for autism. Opportunities for pupils to succeed have been enhanced since the previous inspection because of improved access to a wider curriculum. There is an increased emphasis on formal and informal monitoring which enables senior staff to more rigorously evaluate the school's provision.

The tracking and analysis of pupils' achievement is well developed and this has a positive impact on the pupils' good progress. The recording of each small step in pupils' learning is not however consistently managed and this detracts from teacher's ability to focus on each aspect of their pupils' achievement. Nonetheless, the leadership is well placed to make a positive impact on improvement.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Not long ago I came to the school to see how you were getting on and whether I could suggest anything to make the school better. You made me very welcome and I enjoyed eating lunch with some of you. Thank you and well done.

I was with you for two days. That was long enough for me to realise that Freemantles is a good school. One of the reasons is that you make good progress in learning to control your behaviour and in getting on with others. I particularly enjoyed visiting you in the classrooms. There were lots of other things that I liked. Here are a few:

- you obviously enjoy school and work hard
- the many different people at the school do their best to look after you
- you are helped to be as independent as possible and to take responsibility for your own actions.

There is one thing which I think would make the school better. Teachers should agree on the best ways to write about all the progress you make in your lessons.

Please thank your parents for the many very helpful comments they made on the questionnaires.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Melvyn Blackband

Lead Inspector