

# Friern Barnet School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101345
<b>Local Authority</b>	Barnet
<b>Inspection number</b>	307659
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Angela Corbett

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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	769
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Margaret Johnson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Jeremy Turner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 April 2004
<b>School address</b>	Hemington Avenue Friern Barnet London N11 3LS
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8368 2777
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8368 3208

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, one Additional Inspector seconded to Her Majesty's Inspectorate and two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The majority of pupils at Friern Barnet School live locally. They come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with the largest two groups being two fifths of pupils of White British origin and one sixth from other White backgrounds. A substantial number of pupils are refugees or asylum seekers. Almost half of the pupils speak a first language other than English, of whom over 30 are at early stages of learning English. Just under one third of pupils are entitled to free school meals, this is well above average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average; in recent years, it has been higher for boys than for girls. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is higher than in most schools. The number of pupils with statements of special educational need is just above average. An inclusion centre forms part of the school. The school gained specialist status in performing arts in 2004.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school that meets the needs of its diverse range of pupils, some of whom enter the school with little spoken English. Pupils make good progress in relation to their low starting points. In 2007, the GCSE results rose substantially and are now close to the national average. In this very caring school, pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils greatly increase their self-confidence and social skills. They get on well together and feel safe. They enjoy school and the wide range of performing arts opportunities it offers. They speak of the school with pride.

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has created a shared vision of success that has capitalised on the expertise of the staff and brought about significant improvements in a short time. Leadership and management are good overall. Self-evaluation involves staff well, is accurate and links clearly to strategic planning. Significant changes in the way the school is led and managed have improved pupils' progress and behaviour, and the curriculum. The school now works with other schools and local colleges to offer a wider variety of courses that match pupils' needs well. The rapid improvement in the school's learning culture since the appointment of the headteacher in September 2006 is the consistent message expressed by staff, pupils and governors. The increased number of pupils applying to join the school reflects its growing reputation in the local community. The recent improvements and the effectiveness of leadership and management demonstrate a good capacity for continued improvement.

Effectively targeted support in Years 9 and 11 contributed to pupils' improved results in 2007. Nevertheless, progress is variable across the school. It is linked to the quality of teaching and the use of assessment. While progress is good in English and science, it is satisfactory in mathematics. Teaching is good. In most lessons, pupils participate actively in challenging work that helps them learn well. In many lessons, but not all, they are clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Sometimes the quality of teaching is not as good and activities do not meet the needs of all pupils. Information about pupils with particular needs is used well by some teachers to enable the pupils to take a full part in activities, but this practice is not consistent. The use of assessment information and targets to track pupils' progress and to help them all do better varies across subjects and year groups. The school has rightly set the use of assessment and tracking as priorities for improvement and put in place measures to achieve this.

The arts specialism is making a good impact on the curriculum, approaches to teaching and learning, links with local schools and pupils' participation. Pupils talk of everyone being encouraged to participate in performance activities in and out of lessons and how this has improved their self-confidence and social skills.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve progress and attainment, particularly in mathematics.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good, to enhance the progress of all pupils throughout the school.
- Improve the impact of the monitoring of pupils' progress against their targets by showing them more consistently how to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement and standards are good. Pupils make good progress from their below average standards on entry. The standards they reach improved greatly at Key Stage 4 in 2007, where the percentage attaining five or more grades A\* to C at GCSE reached close to the national average. Pupils make good progress in English and science, but in mathematics they make satisfactory progress. The school put in place effective support in Years 9 and 11 that contributed to the substantial improvements in 2007. The school has met its challenging targets at Key Stage 3 and 4, but the specialist school targets set four years ago were not met.

In 2007, a group of girls underachieved, including some lower attainers. The school has now introduced courses that better meet these pupils' needs, which have contributed to current pupils making improved progress. Groups of pupils who had low attainment in 2007 are doing better this year. All groups are making at least satisfactory progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show respect to each other and behaviour around the school is good overall. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils feel safe and know who to go to if they need support. They enjoy school and the range of activities it offers. Aided by the performing arts specialism, they work cooperatively in discussions and groups where they develop good social skills that prepare them well for the future. Pupils have a strong sense of community and willingly take on additional responsibilities such as helping younger pupils through peer mentoring and acting as buddies for new pupils. They contribute well to the local community, particularly through the performing arts specialism. Many are involved in performances, sports events and projects with primary school pupils. The 'School Parliament' is beginning to provide a voice for pupils. It was recently successful in obtaining a grant to establish a brand new fitness studio. These experiences, supported by sound careers advice, prepare pupils well for the world of work. Pupils are very aware of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and like the free salad options for school lunches. Peer- and self-evaluation, for instance in drama and dance, develop their skills in understanding how they can progress. Attendance is below the national average. New systems for improving attendance and punctuality are in their early stages and have started to have an impact through the consistent application of rewards and sanctions, which pupils speak about positively.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. The drive to improve teaching and learning is evident in how teachers share ideas with each other and seek out new approaches. There is a strong emphasis on creating a positive climate for learning and ensuring that interactions between teachers and pupils are constructive. For example, in a modern foreign languages lesson, the teacher encouraged collaboration by saying 'this is a team effort - let's all help'. Across the school, teaching involves pupils in active learning and using performing arts skills. In the most effective

lessons, good questioning challenges pupils to think for themselves and apply what they learn through lively, purposeful activities. Information and communication technology (ICT) helps to make lessons come alive where teachers are confident in its use. The school rightly recognises that good practice in using assessment does not feature in all lessons and has included it as a target in the school improvement plan. Pupils make good progress when they are clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. This was seen in art where pupils were helped very creatively using differently coloured hands that showed the assessed level on one side and, on the reverse, how to move to the next level. In some lessons, where the work does not meet all pupils' needs and teachers do not monitor carefully enough how well pupils are doing, they make less progress. Information about pupils with particular needs is used well by some teachers so they can take a full part in activities, though this practice is not consistent in all lessons. The school has in place a wide range of additional support for pupils; they make good progress when it is well directed to meet their needs. Vibrant displays around the school set the scene for high expectations and enhance pupils' learning as well as celebrating their work; particularly good examples were seen in art and technology.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of the curriculum is good. It is greatly enriched by the performing arts specialism. In partnership with other schools and a local college, the school has established a successful vocational performing arts course. The results for the first pupils to complete this programme are outstanding. Pupils in Year 9 are also following a GCSE in expressive arts this year.

The school has recently taken steps to ensure that the curriculum helps all learners, including the gifted and talented and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to progress and perform well. For example, in Year 10, pupils are able to study either three separate sciences at GCSE or the double science award. They can also choose from a range of vocational options for two afternoons a week at local colleges. Beauty therapy courses have been developed on the school site and pupils learn construction skills through a mobile centre which visits regularly. There is evidence that these changes are increasing motivation for those who have achieved less well than others in previous years. One pupil said how much he was enjoying his course in motor vehicle studies at the local college and that it linked well to his career choice.

Learning is enriched by a wide range of activities in and outside lessons, including sports, a film-making club and events led by professional artists. The school's enrichment curriculum enables pupils to access activities such as first aid, an additional language, swimming or sports leaders' awards. There are good opportunities for pupils to work with the local community. Pupils in Year 9 ran a story-telling project for a local special school. Workshops on life skills supplement the personal, social and health education programme and help pupils develop their study skills and prepare for the future. The school is currently mapping how ICT and citizenship are provided across subjects to make sure that they are developed as fully as possible.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good care, guidance and support. It is a very caring school in which staff know pupils well. They are thoroughly committed to promoting pupils' well-being and achievement. Safeguarding requirements are met. Pupils find the information and experiences they are given very helpful in making choices for their future. Staff have worked well to reduce instances of verbal bullying recognised in pupil surveys and provide good support for pupils.

The Fantome Centre provides a safe and caring environment for supporting pupils with a wide range of social, emotional and academic needs. Pupils speak highly of it and choose sensibly to avail themselves of it. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well in their personal development. Pupils at early stages of learning English are supported very well to make a smooth transition into the school, ably assisted by pupil buddies. Their language level is assessed and monitored well. Nevertheless, assessment is not used well to provide targets across subjects for pupils who join the school without Key Stage 2 results. The performing arts specialism and good quality care have contributed well to the rise in pupils' self-confidence and social skills, which has enabled many pupils at risk of disaffection to engage well in school.

Pupils receive termly reports on their attainment, attitude to learning and target level or grade in each subject. The provision of such targets contributes effectively to pupils' progress. The school has rightly identified as a priority the need for greater coherence and efficiency in its tracking and target setting systems, and has set in place procedures for achieving this. In the best cases, assessment is used well to track pupils' progress against targets, inform teaching, and give pupils ways to improve but this is not consistent. There is room for targets, such as those set at academic review day, to provide a sharper focus on subject performance against which progress can be monitored more regularly.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's outstanding leadership has empowered the development of increasingly strong leadership at all levels and a shared vision for the school. The senior leadership team have developed into an effective unit since the headteacher's appointment. Responsibilities are now clear. A parent commented 'the headteacher is a good motivator and is passionate about the pupils and the school'. Coached by the headteacher, staff have directed their energies into raising standards and increasing the rate at which pupils make progress. This has contributed to the much-improved GCSE examination results in summer 2007. New rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance have involved staff and led to a shared understanding of accountability for all. Strengths and areas for development are accurately diagnosed and translated into challenging action plans. The school's initiatives to improve the consistency of the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of leadership and management of individual subject areas are proving successful in most areas. Governors are committed and know the school well. They play an active role in school, participate in self-evaluation and obtain direct information through their links with staff. Nevertheless, there is room for a more rigorous approach to ensuring that all statutory requirements are met in full. From a position of deficit, finances and resources have been managed efficiently. A strong team of highly committed associate staff provide effective administrative and site support for pupils' care and learning. The school takes good advantage of the expertise of external agencies to enhance pupils' well-being.

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## Inspection judgements

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

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

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

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

## Annex A

**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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

11 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Friern Barnet School, London, N11 3LS

Following our visit to your school we would like to thank you for making us feel welcome and for sharing your views with us.

We think that Friern Barnet School is a good school, with a positive learning culture where everyone gets on well together. Both you and your parents agree with this judgement. You are rightly proud of your school. We were particularly pleased to see how much the GCSE results had improved in 2007.

We believe that the staff care a great deal about your personal development and are very committed to supporting you during your time at school. As a result you develop well into self-confident young people. You enjoy school and you behave well, but your attendance is below the national average. You appreciate the benefits that arise from the performing arts specialism. Teaching is good and you make good progress in most lessons, particularly when learning is active, support is well planned and you are shown how to improve. However, your progress is only satisfactory in some lessons. The range of subjects and courses is good and has increased to better meet your individual needs. The quality of your work on display around the school is good.

Your headteacher and school leaders provide good leadership that sets a clear vision for the school. The good leadership and management of the school have brought about many improvements over the last year, which I know you appreciate.

We have asked the school to:

- improve your progress and attainment, particularly in mathematics
- improve teaching so all of you make even better progress in all lessons
- use checks on your progress and your targets more consistently to show you how to improve.

You can help by working hard, attending well and making the most of the opportunities on offer.

Angela Corbett

Lead Inspector