

# Freehold Community Junior Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105630
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oldham
<b>Inspection number</b>	308898
<b>Inspection date</b>	23 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jim Kidd

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	253
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Steven Critchlow
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J Willetts
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 January 2004
<b>School address</b>	Sidmouth Street Oldham Lancashire OL9 7RG
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 2872575
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, the quality of teaching and learning, leadership and management at all levels, and improvements made since the previous inspection. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form, nationally published assessment data, the school's own assessment records, relevant policies, observations of the school at work, including visits to lessons in all classes, and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Discussions were also held with staff, governors, pupils, parents, a student teacher in training and the school improvement adviser. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This average sized yet oversubscribed school serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average but rising. Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the vast majority of them have English as an additional language, many receiving substantial language support. Freehold is an Eco School, holds Healthy School status and has the Activemark and Artsmark awards. It has recently been granted training school status for initial teacher training.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The views of pupils who say, 'At Freehold we have the best education' and the comments of parents who add, 'Our children are safe, happy and making wonderful progress' sum up just why this is an outstanding school. Pupils' personal, emotional and academic welfare are at the very heart of everything the school tries to do and underpin the first-class progress pupils make in lessons. Moreover, the strong links it has with other schools do much to foster community cohesion and to teach all pupils about religions and cultures different from their own. It provides excellent value for money.

From low skills on entry to the Nursery, pupils make outstanding progress across all key stages and reach above average standards by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have risen markedly since the previous inspection and the trend of improvement has been significantly higher than both the local and national pictures. Strategies to develop pupils' oral skills continue to be very effective indeed and have led to much higher performance in reading and writing. Pupils consistently surpass challenging targets and inspection evidence demonstrates that more pupils than ever before in the current Year 6 class are on target to reach National Curriculum Level 5 in the core subjects.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Their behaviour is exemplary and older pupils are delighted to act as 'buddies' for their younger counterparts. Pupils feel safe in school because, in their words, 'Not only do our teachers and teaching assistants help us when we have problems, but our classmates are there for us too.' Pupils have a keen social conscience and support a wide range of local, national and global charities. They have a profound understanding of the work of the United Nations in relation to the rights of children but are also fully aware, through thought-provoking assemblies for example, of their responsibilities as good citizens. The school council has a high reputation among those it represents and its idea to introduce a suggestions box has gone down well with pupils in all years. Members of the school council have also expressed the views of their constituents on how attendance may be improved and the positive effect of their work, and of the work of the learning mentor, is demonstrated in the highest attendance figures the school has ever had. Healthy eating and keeping fit are bywords in school and pupils give convincing advice to visitors on what to eat and what to avoid!

Pupils respond enthusiastically to the outstanding teaching they receive. Challenge is high, pace is rapid and assignments invariably refer to real-life situations. In a superb Year 6 science lesson, for example, both the teacher and teaching assistant ensured that their questions and their use of 'thinking hats' made their pupils delve more deeply into the subject matter. Similarly, the high expectations evident in a Year 4 English lesson led to pupils using complex subject terminology accurately and in context. As a result, many were able to justify their opinions with a confidence which belied their years. Pupils willingly challenge and support each other and also use the vibrant displays as a resource for their learning.

The good curriculum has been developed further, of late, by incorporating more research by pupils and giving them more chances to speak about what they are learning. Teachers are concerned to ensure that pupils take more responsibility for their own progress and to encourage them to see the connections between subjects. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this new curriculum on pupils' learning, but it is already evident that the boundaries between the subjects are beginning to disappear for many pupils. For example, pupils study history

successfully, on occasions, through art. The quality, extent and take-up of enrichment activities are outstanding. In areas ranging from cheerleading to jewellery making and from Spanish to drama, adults work tirelessly to provide their pupils with experiences which motivate them to want to learn. The school has made significant improvements since the previous inspection in the delivery of the arts and corridors and classrooms are adorned with pupils' portraits, poetry and pictures.

Care, guidance and support are of the highest order. The outstanding learning mentor and excellent team of teaching assistants ensure that each and every pupil can take full advantage of everything the school has to offer. Staff see the vital link between their pupils' personal development and academic progress and pupils of all abilities are encouraged to do their best. Academic guidance is comprehensive and pupils are fully aware of their performance, of their potential and of how they can reach their next stage in learning. Child protection procedures are in place and fully meet national guidelines.

In the words of teachers, 'In our school, we are all mentors for each other and we are responsible for and accountable to each other.' Indeed, the inspirational work of the headteacher, who leads by example and who is held in such high regard by the whole school community, ensures that all staff have the same, clear vision for development of the school. Teachers and teaching assistants are delighted to take on responsibility and play a key role, for example through working parties, in evaluating and improving performance in all areas of school life. Governors, too, are actively involved in overseeing progress and their annual monitoring days involve them in lesson observations, data analysis and discussions with pupils and staff. Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding.

Significant progress since the previous inspection, high levels of achievement by pupils, both personally and academically, and excellent leadership and management demonstrate that the school has outstanding capacity to improve further. Parents recognise just how much the school does for their children and express their admiration by comments such as, 'Freehold is excellent; there now are things we are learning from our sons and daughters that we didn't even know!'

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

The Foundation Stage gives children, many of whom arrive with no English and with low personal and social skills, an excellent start to their school careers. They make outstanding progress in both Nursery and Reception in communication, language and literacy and their social skills improve at a rapid rate. For example, an emphasis on the use of 'talking partners' leads to confident speech and does much to improve children's self-esteem. As a result, children behave very well, play happily together and are delighted to show visitors their work and take them round the bright, colourful and well resourced area. Leadership and management are outstanding and the experienced coordinator has clear vision for development, of the outdoor area for example, and leads a talented team of teachers and teaching assistants with skill. All staff are committed to the highest levels of support and care for every child in their charge.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Embed the new curriculum and evaluate its impact on developing pupils' skills of research and of communicating their findings.

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## Annex A

## 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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1

<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>	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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



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**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you so much for the wonderful welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. You were all very friendly and polite and I enjoyed talking to you. It was a pleasure to meet the school council at breakfast club and the group of pupils who came to talk to me at lunchtime. I also enjoyed reading your letters about how much you like school. I would now like to tell you the really good things about your school.

Freehold is an outstanding school and I know that you, your parents and the adults who work with you are very proud of it! You feel safe in school and look after each other very well. You make excellent progress in English, mathematics and science and the work you produce using computers is very good indeed. You reach standards which are above those in many schools because the teaching you receive is outstanding and the support you get from your teaching assistants is marvellous. Your art work, mosaics, stories and poetry are stunning and everyone speaks very highly of your acting and singing in the annual school productions.

The school council represents your views very well indeed and younger children are grateful for the work of the 'buddies' who organise games and make sure no one is lonely at breaks and lunchtimes. Your behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent and you treat visitors with respect and courtesy. In the Reception class, for example, children are delighted to show off their work and how they can write their names! You are well aware of why it is important to eat healthily and you take full part in the many sports activities you have. You also enjoy the links you have with other primary and secondary schools.

It doesn't matter how good a school is (and yours is excellent!) it can always improve. I have asked your teachers to work out how they can make sure that the new curriculum allows you to find even more things out for yourselves. Then your headteacher and governors can see how successful this has been.