

Freshsteps

Parkview Nurseries, Theobalds Park Road, Crews Hill, Enfield EN2 9BQ

Inspection dates

31 October – 2 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The school's proprietor, who is also the headteacher, provides exceptionally strong leadership. She ensures that pupils with a wide range of complex needs benefit from an outstanding education.
- Leaders ensure that the school's effective safeguarding arrangements are understood by all and leave pupils feeling safe and capable of keeping themselves safe.
- Leaders are determined to ensure that all pupils feel fully included in school life and can enjoy a rich range of experiences. The provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. New pupils rapidly gain confidence and feel part of the school community.
- From widely varying starting points, pupils make sustained progress in their personal and academic development.
- Teachers enable pupils to rediscover the importance of learning, often after long periods of absence from education.
- Teaching is effective across the curriculum, though it has only recently been strengthened in science and technology.
- Leaders ensure that teachers and support staff receive well-considered training that is tailored to help them meet current pupils' needs.
- Members of staff work as a cohesive team and with parents to improve pupils' behaviour. Attendance is high, despite many pupils' poor attendance records before joining this school.
- Governors provide insightful, strong support for leaders. They have successfully overseen the school's recent expansion.
- The proprietor and staff have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop the range and quality of the curriculum for science and technology, ensuring that teachers responsible for these subjects take the necessary steps to further improve pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The proprietor, who is also the headteacher, provides very effective leadership. She ensures that all staff understand their roles and share her commitment to continuous school improvement. All members of staff share a common vision and ambition to provide high-quality teaching that helps pupils make up for lost time, or overcome barriers to learning. As a result, leaders have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- In the last two years, the proprietor and senior leaders have made a success of the expansion of the school to include a primary phase. They have also managed the transition to new premises effectively. Their work to sustain a sharp focus on the quality of teaching makes a strong contribution to the excellent outcomes that pupils achieve. Where the quality of teaching has occasionally not lived up to leaders' very high expectations, they have taken prompt and effective action to correct this.
- Leaders at all levels thoroughly monitor pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. The wide range of evidence they obtain from this work enables them to identify and meet staff training needs. It also ensures that the appraisal of staff's work is always linked to outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have been very successful in ensuring that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to their learning. The strong emphasis that leaders place on teaching pupils about equality and respecting difference enables sensitive and challenging issues to be tackled openly and honestly.
- Pupils contribute widely to the life of the school. Their opinions are respected and valued by staff. For example, leaders seek the views of pupils when making decisions about the appointment of staff. A wide range of visits and experiences enriches their cultural development.
- The effective curriculum enables pupils to improve their self-esteem and social skills. This leads them to quickly re-engage with learning after what has often been a long absence from formal education. Leaders ensure that emphasis is placed on the development of skills pupils need for them to succeed in their future lives. Pupils benefit from enrichment activities such as horse riding and boxing; in some cases this helps pupils discover new talents of which they were not aware. All pupils receive effective careers and further education advice and guidance. Well-selected work experience placements help them decide on future career ambitions.
- Leaders rigorously monitor outcomes for pupils across the curriculum and insist on the very best for their pupils. For example, in the current school year, after a dip in outcomes in science and technology, steps have been taken to improve identified aspects of teaching.
- Funding for pupils with education, health and care plans (EHC plans) is spent effectively. Leaders ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make substantial progress. This is the result of leaders' exceptional work to monitor the impact of teaching this group on pupils' learning and personal development.
- The headteacher has developed and sustained strong links with the local business community and the local authority. This enables her to offer a wide range of options to help pupils and their parents rediscover the importance of learning.

- Parents and pupils are very positive about the impact of leaders' work on outcomes for pupils. As one parent said, 'leaders ensure that pupils can look beyond what they think they are capable of so that they can achieve beyond their own expectations'.

Governance

- Governors provide effective, skilful challenge to leaders and ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met.
- Governors ensure that the necessary information and guidance is available to parents. They have ensured that the safeguarding policy, which makes reference to current statutory guidance, is published on the school's website.
- Governors provided effective support to ensure that leaders made a success of the school's recent expansion and relocation. They have also supported the headteacher effectively in tackling weaknesses so that the quality of teaching has been raised to and sustained at a high level.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's policy for safeguarding is appropriate and available to parents via the school's website.
- Pupils are very confident that they feel safe at school. They demonstrate effective knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe, even when their particular needs make this more of a challenge.
- Parents express confidence in the school's work to keep children safe. Some told the inspector how they particularly appreciate the specialist training provided to equip staff to look after pupils with particular medical needs.
- Well-considered training is provided to help staff understand safeguarding arrangements. The specific needs of pupils are taken into account when deciding on priorities for training. For example, staff have recently undergone enhanced training about child sexual exploitation so that teachers have a good knowledge of the warning signs to which they should be alert.
- Leaders work effectively with other professionals to support pupils who may be at particular risk. Staff have gained a clear understanding of their role in protecting pupils from the risk of radicalisation because of training in the 'Prevent' duty.
- Leaders assess and manage risks, both in the school and the local community, showing an excellent understanding of the needs of the pupils they serve. This reassures parents and helps staff feel confident when taking pupils out of school. Consequently, pupils are able to broaden their social and cultural awareness.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers and support staff work together well as a team to ensure that pupils with significant and often multiple needs quickly become capable of participating in education and making strong progress. Newer members of staff speak very highly of the way teachers support one another in their work and share expertise.

- Teachers work very effectively in partnership with parents and other agencies to ensure that pupils make sustained outstanding progress from their very varied starting points.
- Teachers make sure that pupils know that their views are important in shaping lessons and determining their curriculum. Pupils value this and say that it is one of many ways in which teachers inspire them. Ex-pupils return to the school to help teachers exemplify ambitions and expectations for younger pupils.
- Teachers apply the school's agreed policies effectively to promote good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. They explain what is expected of pupils clearly, so they can recognise how they can improve their work.
- In the strongest teaching, teachers build on every small step to success that pupils make in their academic progress. Over time, current pupils have made strong progress in English and mathematics. Teachers skilfully judge when the most able pupils are ready to be challenged further.
- Newly appointed staff have improved the teaching of science and technology so that pupils' rates of progress are catching up with those in other subjects.
- Teachers use reviews of EHC plans well to ensure that pupils take increasing responsibility for their own learning. Support staff work seamlessly with teachers in lessons and make exceptionally skilful use of assessment to promote pupils' learning.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Leaders ensure that teachers are provided with specialist training so they can provide effective support for pupils with complex needs to help them develop their basic reading skills.
- Teachers offer pupils excellent guidance on preparing for their future lives. They ensure that pupils develop the self-confidence and skills to cope with situations such as job interviews and dealing with money.
- A wide range of specialist enrichment work is taught well, including horse riding, boxing and art therapy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils who typically arrive at the school with weak social skills and low self-esteem recapture their confidence and quickly begin to see how learning is both fun and important to them. Teachers contribute very well to the development of their self-esteem.
- Leaders put equality at the heart of the school's work, ensuring that pupils' views are considered. This contributes to pupils' understanding and application of British values.
- Teachers make sure that pupils learn to stay safe, attending to their varied individual needs. They rethink lessons when it becomes apparent that pupils need more time to understand how to stay safe, or to have something explained in a different way.
- Older pupils are provided with excellent opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes they need to make the transition to work or further education. For example, during the inspection, Year 11 pupils were learning how to make a formal presentation of their

recent work in science.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils learn to concentrate in lessons and show positive attitudes to the work they are given. New pupils, including the very small number of girls, are made to feel welcome and secure by their peers. As a result, from the time of their arrival, instances of poor behaviour decline quickly.
- Leaders and teachers make sure that there is time for pupils to discuss and think about their behaviour. Pupils understand the rewards and sanctions in the school's behaviour policy and believe them to be fair. Time is taken to explain the routines and content of the school day so that unexpected events create as little disturbance as possible.
- Pupils who spoke to the inspector were clear that discriminatory behaviour and bullying are rare at school and are tackled well by teachers when they do occur.
- Pupils deepen their understanding of why they behave the way they do because of a wide range of interventions and therapies on offer.
- Many pupils arrive at the school having missed a lot of time at school. Leaders' tireless determination to overcome barriers to attendance means that this improves rapidly and nearly all pupils come to school very regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils typically join the school at different times in the year. Many arrive with complex needs and a history of disengagement with education. Most pupils' starting points are very low. From these starting points, they make sustained progress in their personal development and in the subjects they learn.
- The diverse and wide-ranging curriculum helps pupils understand the importance of learning and broadens their interests. Some pupils discover new talents and abilities, which they are keen to develop rapidly. Older pupils make strong progress in developing the skills needed to cope with the challenges of their future careers, such as being able to present their views to an audience.
- In recent years all Year 11 pupils have gone on to obtain places in further education or employment. Current pupils are on track to obtain a range of qualifications, despite having missed a significant part of their previous education. Some pupils remain at school for a time after Year 11 to improve on their qualifications.
- The school's most able pupils make excellent progress because their abilities and needs are identified promptly on arrival. The personalised approach to teaching and learning ensures that these pupils benefit from stimulating activities which challenge and inspire them to achieve as well as they are able.
- The school's assessment information shows that pupils make strong progress in English and mathematics from typically very low starting points. Pupils receive interesting and effective opportunities to gain confidence in using and applying mathematical skills.
- Younger pupils make strong progress in learning phonics, whatever their starting points or previous barriers to learning. They also make good progress in developing the physical

and spatial skills needed to write down words, often from very low starting points. Pupils make sustained progress in using the basic features of different types of writing, such as when they write persuasive letters.

- The most able pupils read widely and enjoy using books to enrich their moral and cultural education. For example, during the inspection some older pupils were using books to learn about Martin Luther King.
- Pupils' progress in science and technology is now beginning to match that in other subjects because of prompt and decisive actions taken by leaders to improve the teaching of these subjects.

School details

Unique reference number	135839
DfE registration number	308/6305
Inspection number	10026296

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Diane Anderson
Headteacher	Diane Anderson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,000-32,000 per annum
Telephone number	020 8803 5827
Website	www.freshstepseducationcentre.org.uk
Email address	admin@freshstepseducationcentre.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 December 2013

Information about this school

- Freshsteps offers special provision as an alternative for pupils who have experienced difficulties in mainstream schools or have been absent from education for a significant period.
- The school is registered for up to 40 boys and girls, aged 5 to 18, who experience social, emotional and mental health difficulties. There are currently many more boys than girls.
- Pupils arrive with a wide range of abilities and many have additional learning needs. Some have significant and complex needs related to their behaviour.
- Most pupils have an education, health and care plan. Local authorities fund the pupils' placements.

- Most pupils are of White British and African Caribbean backgrounds.
- The school does not make use of any off-site additional provision. However, they use a local football club and leisure centre for physical education. Pupils also use a local park, which is a short distance away from the school, for outdoor play and learning.
- The school was judged good at its previous full inspection in December 2013. In 2016, an additional inspection to consider a material change for expansion and relocation of the school found that all the independent school standards were likely to be met if this change was recommended.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector conducted a tour of the school's premises with the proprietor to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspector attended an assembly and an off-site horse-riding lesson and conducted a number of observations in lessons, some alongside the headteacher.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of pupils' work and spoke with pupils about their views of the school.
- The inspector met a number of parents to discuss their views of the school. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View, to make analysis possible.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents including policies, behaviour records, the safeguarding information and records of pupils' achievement.
- The school's website was scrutinised to confirm that the required information was available for parents.

Inspection team

Andrew Wright, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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