

# Freshsteps

Independent school inspection report

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DCSF registration number	308/6305
Unique Reference Number (URN)	135839
Inspection number	353821
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Daniel Towl HMI

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A<sup>1</sup> of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005<sup>2</sup>, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Freshsteps is an alternative educational provision which opened in September 2009 in the London Borough of Enfield. It admits students aged 11–18 years. It is registered for fifteen students but currently has eight on roll. All the students have previously had very disrupted schooling and require support for their behavioural, social and emotional needs. Most of the students are part time and are dually registered in local secondary schools. Three students have statements of special educational needs. Among its aims, the school hopes to '...build self-esteem and confidence which will enable students to improve their educational outcomes and make positive decisions about their future.' This is the school's first inspection.

## Evaluation of the school

Under the good leadership of the headteacher, in just over two terms the school has made a successful start and provides a good overall education for its students. It is successful in meeting its aims. Relationships between students, teachers and mentors are outstanding and this makes a strong contribution to students' personal development and attitudes. Teaching and learning are good especially in the school's specialist area of design and technology (DT). The curriculum offered is satisfactory. The school has been very successful in promoting the moral and social development of students, which is good. There is good provision to ensure the welfare, health and safety and safeguarding of students. One student wrote, 'The best thing about Freshsteps is for the first time in my educational life I have not been bullied. I wouldn't say that we are all best buddies but we get on and usually look out for one another.' The school meets all the regulations.

## Quality of education

The curriculum overall is satisfactory. Much of it follows commercial schemes or examination syllabuses. All Key Stage 4 students have targets to achieve two GCSE qualifications, one in graphic design and one in DT involving resistant materials. Within a short period, for some just over one term, students have developed good quality coursework folders and made artefacts such as prototype board games and

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

clocks. This aspect of the curriculum is good. There is extensive use of information and communication technology (ICT). The progress of students in this area is good. Students are very competent in using computer graphics programs.

Students develop their basic numeracy and literacy skills satisfactorily. They generally come to the school with weak achievements in these areas because of poor attendance at other schools. Reading skills are better than writing skills. Some students are following a GCSE English course and all are effectively developing more understanding of grammar, sentence construction, inference and comprehension. Considering the students' starting points, overall progress is good because they are completing more work and have better attitudes than they did previously in other schools. Planning for English and mathematics is satisfactory. The school is still developing its methodology to provide a more tailored approach to these key subjects in order to better meet the individual needs of students. The science and physical education (PE) curricula are not fully developed.

The school has a small number of students who have statements of special educational needs. The school is able to meet the needs of the students. Parents and students are satisfied with the curriculum and provision offered by the school.

There are regular personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons which include learning about citizenship. The school is very aware of the importance of this aspect of the curriculum. The school is very successful in the way in which it develops PSHE in an informal way through the various conversations and actions of staff and pupils throughout the day. This has a significant positive impact in helping students to develop their personal skills.

Teaching and assessment are mostly good. Teachers and mentors have outstanding relationships with students and this has a very positive effect on their attitudes to learning and willingness to persevere and complete tasks including homework. Students have confidence in the adults who support them. There are particular strengths in the teaching of DT, enabling students to make good progress. Teaching of this curriculum area is well planned and good attention is given to ensuring that students produce good quality work. Practical skills, such as the cutting and finishing of wood, are carefully taught as are design skills using computer software. Students' work is also enhanced by access to good quality equipment.

Teachers ensure that some of the literacy and numeracy activities are related to DT coursework but there are some missed opportunities to be more imaginative in teaching basic skills and to better meet the needs of the individual students.

Students' work is regularly marked and individual targets are set for each student in order to ensure that coursework is completed on time. Teachers make clear reference to the grades of each piece of work and what needs to be done to improve. Students are aware of their expected targets for GCSE work. The school is not yet making the best use of assessment to measure small improvements in basic

literacy and numeracy skills in order to check more accurately the rate at which students are progressing. The school is researching the use of some different and more appropriate qualification routes for the students who previously have completed very little structured learning in basic skills.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their moral and social development is good. The school has a very calm ethos because of the outstanding relationships developed between staff and students which are built on mutual respect and trust. Students respond well to the consistent and clear approach to discipline. Staff have very high expectations to which students respond well. It is clear that a placement here is not just an 'easy option'. All the students say they enjoy school, which is evidenced by the significantly improved attendance compared with their previous school placements. Although aggregated attendance is low, caused by a few students' dealings with other agencies outside the school's control, there are some very high individual attendance rates which show a remarkable change in students' willingness to attend school.

Behaviour is good. There is a very consistent approach to behaviour management. Students are attentive in lessons. This is because of the mutual respect within the school community and the improved self-esteem of students and increasing pride in their work. Every effort is made to help them to succeed. One student wrote, 'My behaviour changed for the good because I felt more relaxed and I enjoy my work more now because I have teachers that can explain my work to me which gives me a better understanding.' Another student wrote, 'I am proud of myself because I made a jewellery box and I have started making a clock, which is very interesting.'

Students contribute effectively to the school community by following rules and behaving well. They have also been consulted on what sporting activities they would like to participate in. Opportunities to contribute to the wider community have not yet been fully explored by the school at this early stage of its development. Students learn about national institutions and services in citizenship. They have undertaken some studies and had discussions about different cultures though this is not well established yet. The ethos of the school successfully promotes tolerance and the PSHE programme promotes an understanding of students' own culture and identity.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision to promote welfare, health and safety is good. All requirements relating to safeguarding are met. Procedures and policies are clear. Day-to-day supervision of students is excellent. The designated person for child protection has attended the appropriate training and all staff have been briefed. All will soon have additional training. The school has excellent relationships with a number of local support agencies and this helps to provide good all-round care for the students.

Staff are very alert to the concerns of students. They know them very well. Great care is taken to ensure students' safety and welfare at all times. Appropriate risk assessments have been undertaken for the practical activities in DT lessons and for outside visits. Fire risk assessments are undertaken by the Borough of Enfield which owns the building. Fire drills take place at regular intervals. Students are briefed about health and safety before undertaking practical activities and they work safely and carefully. Appropriate numbers of staff have had first-aid training.

The school does not have any PE facilities on site. However there are regular visits to a local boxing gymnasium and to a nearby basketball court. This enables students to have regular physical activity. The quality of the boxing coaching is good and students 'work-out' energetically improving their coordination and alertness. Students learn about healthy eating and personal health during PSHE lessons and there are many opportunities for students to talk with staff about these issues, when they want to, in a relaxed manner during the course of the day. The improvement in basic skills and good progress in practical skills adequately support students' future economic well-being.

The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, amended by the Special Educational Needs & Disability Act 2001.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All appropriate checks are undertaken before staff are appointed. All safeguarding checks on staff, such as the Criminal Records Bureau check, have been carried out. A single central register of checks is maintained as required.

### School's premises and accommodation

The school occupies rooms on the first floor of converted offices. The main teaching room has computers, a practical workshop and general work area. The premises are in a good state of repair and well looked after. Facilities for students who are unwell are adequate. There is no outside recreational area attached to the school for students at break times although good use is made of a small outdoor area nearby where they can relax and play basketball.

### Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school meets all the regulations in this aspect. Regular reports of students' progress are sent to parents and carers. There are good relationships with referring agencies and placing schools.

### Procedures for handling complaints

The school has clear procedures for making complaints. There have been no complaints since the school opened.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations').

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Explore more imaginative ways to develop students' individual basic skills in English and mathematics and improve assessment in order to measure smaller steps in progress.
- Enable students to contribute more to the school's own and the wider community.
- Find more opportunities to develop pupils' broader cultural awareness.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development			✓	
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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## School details

Name of school	Freshsteps
DCSF number	308/6305
Unique reference number (URN)	135839
Type of school	Special school for students with behavioural, social and emotional needs
Status	Independent
Date school opened	September 2009
Age range of pupils	11–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 6      Girls: 0      Total: 6
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 2      Girls: 0      Total: 2
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 3      Girls: 0      Total: 3
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,600 – £2,900 for a six week placement
Address of school	Fresh Steps Unit 4 14 Centreway Claverings Industrial Estate Montague Road Edmonton London N9 0AH
Telephone number	020 8803 5827
Email address	di@freshstepseducationcentre.org.uk
Headteacher	Ms Diane Anderson
Proprietor	Ms Diane Anderson
Reporting inspector	Daniel Towl HMI
Dates of inspection	28–29 April 2010