

The Freeston Business and Enterprise College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108295
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	309645
Inspection dates	19–20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Jan Bennett HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	1,050
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev R Ayres
Headteacher	Mrs G Metcalfe
Date of previous school inspection	November 2003
School address	Favell Avenue Normanton West Yorkshire WF6 1HZ
Telephone number	01924 302560
Fax number	01924 302564

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Freeston Business and Enterprise College is a mixed comprehensive school to the east of Wakefield. Most students are from White British families. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is just below average and more students than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Freeston has had specialist status in business and enterprise since 2003.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Freeston Business and Enterprise College provides a sound education for its students. It is an improving school with the capacity to improve further. The school is very well led by the headteacher who has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and clear plans for improvement. She is assisted by a strong senior leadership team and is well supported by an experienced governing body with a good knowledge of the school. Resources are deployed effectively and finances are carefully managed.

Freeston is a warm, friendly and inclusive school that provides a safe and caring environment in which students can learn. Students appreciate the very good support from the school's student services department, which is central to its work. The school has good links with its feeder primary schools that ease students' transition from primary to secondary school. Behaviour around the school is very good and students feel safe. Students' personal development is good.

Students' performance in public examinations at Key Stage 4 has improved over the last few years and the standards reached are now around the national average, but performance at Key Stage 3 has been slower to improve. Overall, students make the progress expected of them during their time at school.

Most teaching is satisfactory and the satisfactory standard of students' work and progress reflect this. Teachers know their subject well and plan a range of activities, including a starter and a recap of learning at the end of the lesson. In the better lessons teachers use careful questioning to check students understanding and extend their thinking. There is not enough good teaching, however. In too many of the satisfactory lessons, students chatter as they work, which can be distracting, and they do not listen carefully to what the teacher is saying. Few teachers are paying enough attention to planning lessons that cater effectively for the full range of ability in the class.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum has expanded since the last inspection and now includes a range of vocational and academic pathways. These improvements have contributed to the improving standards at Key Stage 4. The school has good links with local employers and businesses that effectively enhance the curriculum. There are strengthening links with the community and the school has an established range of extended provision offering a variety of courses. Few parents responded to the questionnaire but most were positive about the school.

The school gained specialist business and enterprise status in 2003. This has had a very positive effect on GCSE results in business, information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematics. There has also been an increase in the number of students choosing to study these subjects post-16 but specialist status has yet to have a positive impact at Key Stage 3. The school has Enterprise Hub Status and works successfully with nine West Yorkshire schools.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement at Key Stage 3.
- Pay more attention to planning lessons so that they meet the needs of all students in the class.
- Ensure that teaching actively develops the listening skills and concentration levels of students.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall and they are improving, especially at Key Stage 4. Students join the school having reached broadly average standards in Key Stage 2 and they leave at the end of Key Stage 4 having attained average standards. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at the higher grades rose by 17% between 2004 and 2006 and the latest data show a further rise of 8% this year. In 2006, students made satisfactory progress from Key Stage 2 to 4 and early statistics show that the progress made by students who left in 2007 was good. At Key Stage 3 standards are improving, but are below average, and achievement is satisfactory. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. The standard of students' work is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Attendance has improved in recent years and is now average. Behaviour around the school at break and lunchtimes is very good. However, older students feel that poor behaviour in some lessons is hampering learning although this has improved in recent years. There is an effective peer mentoring system and a well-resourced student services department that is well used. Students report that there is very little bullying and the new security measures make them feel safe around the school site. There is an active student council and students were influential in the development of school uniform and the formulation of the new anti-bullying policy. Students have good awareness of leading healthy lifestyles through work across the curriculum and they report that the quality of meals available in school has improved in recent years. Students make a positive contribution to the community through various charity events that run throughout the year and there are some outstanding examples of enterprise schemes. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are developing an awareness and appreciation of other cultures through the work that they do in different areas of the curriculum. They enjoy religious studies lessons where they have meaningful discussions on moral and spiritual issues and learn about other religions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that teaching is satisfactory overall with pockets of good practice. Teachers have good subject knowledge, they share learning objectives with students at the start of lessons and they establish good working relationships in the classroom. Most lessons include a good range of different tasks including an interesting starter. All teachers check, at least summarily, whether the learning objectives have been met and, in the better lessons, teachers use probing questions effectively to check on students' understanding and learning. There are too few lessons in which work is tailored to meet the needs of students with different levels of ability. All students in a class tend to be given the same work to do; this sometimes fails to stretch the brightest students or is too difficult for the least able. In too many lessons students chatter as they work and a small but significant number of teachers fail to ensure that students are listening when they need to be.

Marked work is given back promptly with helpful comments and satisfactory systems are in place for setting targets and reviewing students' progress. In some subjects students receive very clear guidance about what they need to do to reach their target levels, but this is not consistent across the school. There is some good practice in using performance data to target support and hence improve achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum overall is good and is successfully adapted to meet the needs of any students who are unable to manage the social and academic demands of a secondary curriculum. In Key Stage 4 there are clear, well-established pathways that incorporate academic and vocational courses. There is good flexibility within this and students are able to gain a mix of academic and vocational qualifications. The school makes good use of local employers and partner institutions to promote work-related learning and the enterprise culture that is part of the schools' specialist status. There has been a wide expansion of courses in business and ICT in line with this specialist status and courses in adult literacy and numeracy are available for students who might not gain GCSE accreditation in English and mathematics. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 meets statutory requirements but is not personalised sufficiently to meet fully the needs of individual students. The school offers a good and varied programme of extra-curricular activities, including music, drama, sports and visits to businesses and trips abroad. The school is now a well-established provider of extended services including holiday provision and adult education courses on three evenings per week.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school makes good arrangements for the care of students. All legal requirements have been met and the school has good systems to ensure students' health and safety. Students value highly the support of the student services department, which

offers a 'drop in' service for parents as well as students. There is sensitive and effective support for vulnerable students, including looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a good range of imaginative intervention strategies to improve attendance and good links with outside agencies. Transition arrangements into Year 7 are good and students settle quickly into their new surroundings. There is a well-structured careers guidance programme. The new online system provides a comprehensive range of data to staff to enable them to monitor students more effectively but the quality of academic monitoring and guidance is variable and some students feel that there is no overall system in place to review targets. Most students are aware of their academic targets and progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher and senior leaders give a very clear direction and they have created a common sense of purpose amongst staff. A strong and confident middle management team shares this vision. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. Governors and managers know the school well and have clear priorities for improvement. Since the last inspection, they have taken decisive and successful action to tackle weak teaching and have made a number of promising new appointments. Plans are now underway to increase the proportion of good or better teaching. The school has concentrated on raising standards in Years 10 and 11 and Key Stage 4 outcomes are now in line with national averages from a broadly average start in Year 7. The main focus for improvement is now to raise standards and achievement in Key Stage 3 where there are strategies in place to improve literacy skills and raise the aspirations of all students. Plans for a more personalised Key Stage 3 curriculum are clearly set out in the school's development plan. The setting of targets is robust with high levels of achievement expected and encouraged. The experienced and effective governing body has a thorough understanding of the school's work and provides appropriate challenge and support, contributing much to the strategic thinking of the school's leaders. Governors and staff work hard together to provide the best they can for the school's students and the wider community it serves. The school is well placed to continue its improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	3
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 learners' needs?	3
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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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



21 September 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of the Freeston Business and Enterprise College, Normanton, West Yorkshire, WF6 1HZ

Thank you for contributing to our recent inspection of the school. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you at work and hearing your views. We would particularly like to thank those of you who took the time to speak to us in lessons, around the school and in meetings.

Here is a summary of our findings which we hope will be of interest to you.

Freeston is a warm and welcoming school where students are well cared for and feel safe. We think that student services are very good. They play a very important role in supporting you so that you can enjoy and benefit from your education.

We were delighted to see that GCSE results have improved considerably over the last few years: many more of you are now leaving school with at least five GCSEs at good grades. You do not do as well at Key Stage 3, however, and we are asking the school to focus on improving achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9.

We were impressed by the wide range of sports and activities taking place after school and the large numbers of students who participate. We were also pleased to see how many of you are involved in fund- raising and other entrepreneurial activities.

Your behaviour at break and lunchtimes and as you moved around the school was very good: you acted sensibly and showed consideration and respect for each other. There was a lot of chatter going on in some lessons, which meant that too many of you were not paying attention to what the teacher was saying. We have asked the school to make sure that you listen carefully in lessons and concentrate on your work. We have also asked teachers to look again at their lesson plans to make sure that they include activities that are suitable for everyone in the class, whatever their ability.

The school is well led by your headteacher, who has many plans for improving the school further. She has a strong team of managers supporting her and they know exactly what needs to be done to make the school better. We hope that you will continue to play your part in improving the school and we wish you well for the future.

Jan Bennett HMI
Lead inspector