

Freshsteps

Centre 14, Unit 4, Claverings Industrial Estate, Montagu Road, Edmonton, London, N9 0AH

Inspection dates	10–11 December 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Adequate	3
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Students re-engage with education and experience success.
- The school's leaders ensure that teaching is of a consistently high quality that motivates the students and enables them to make good progress over time.
- Good, professional relationships between staff and students successfully promote trust and respect.
- Effective systems to manage behaviour result in a peaceful environment in which students can make good progress.
- Pupils are proud of what they are achieving.

It is not yet outstanding because

- The use of data to track the progress made by students is not yet consistently applied. As a result, lesson planning does not take full account of the different levels of students' abilities.
- The alternative curriculum does not fully meet the stated aims of the school, which are to provide a broad and balanced curriculum.
- A minor weakness was identified in meeting a requirement for welfare, health and safety that does not put students at risk.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with half a day's notice.
- The inspector observed seven lessons in school and two sessions involving all the students at a local leisure centre. All staff were observed. Students' reading was heard and their work was examined.
- Discussions were held with staff, students, a parent, a link teacher from a school that places students in Freshsteps and a member of the school's advisory board. Two staff questionnaires were received and considered.
- School records relating to attendance, achievement and behaviour were scrutinised. School documents were checked against the independent school regulations.

Inspection team

Angela Cook, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Freshsteps provides alternative education for young people whose behavioural, social and emotional needs have disrupted their schooling. It is located on the Claverings Industrial Estate, Edmonton, in the London Borough of Enfield. It first opened in 2009.
- The school is registered for 15 boys and girls aged between 11 and 18 years. It currently has six students on roll, five of whom are boys. Four students have statements of special educational needs. All the students are full time and two are also registered with their local secondary schools.
- Freshsteps aims to provide young people 'who are out of mainstream education and may be at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour and crime' with diverse educational experiences to support their personal development and to provide them with skills for a working life.
- The school uses the facilities of a local leisure centre to provide physical education and sports.
- It was previously inspected in April 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Analyse the students' progress data more effectively to inform planning at strategic and classroom levels, so that teaching consistently challenges the more able students, enabling them to make even greater progress.
- Ensure that the school's aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum is fully met in Key Stage 3, by strengthening the curriculum to cover all the sciences and social and human studies in greater depth.
- Provide students with opportunities to develop their leadership skills and create further roles where they can take on some responsibility.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Students' achievement is good as a result of good teaching and a good curriculum. Students make clear progress in their literacy and numeracy. The school prioritises these to provide students with the skills they will need for their adult life. All staff share the responsibility for developing students' literacy. School data show that the students joining the school last year with low reading and writing abilities are making good progress. Given their very low starting points and their low expectations, the progress made is good. The lower ability students especially make good progress. One said, 'I am proud of what I am doing.' A focus on writing has enabled students confidently to write letters to their previous schools. One student was given a present and a note from his previous school congratulating him on the quality of his letter and, in particular, his joined-up writing. Occasionally, the more able students are not sufficiently challenged and this limits their progress, but overall their progress is also good. Students with statements of special educational needs make good progress and their needs are effectively met.

Students achieve functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT) at Entry Level 1 and 2. The great majority of those entered for these examinations are successful. Those students entered for a GCSE in resistant materials also achieve success.

In recent years students have successfully achieved places at colleges to study for further qualifications, for example a diploma in land-based studies at Capel Manor College. Occasionally, Key Stage 3 students return to their former school. All the students are motivated to learn, because the curriculum is designed to provide them with good opportunities to achieve and acquire the skills they need in adult life. Good quality teaching breaks down tasks into small achievable steps so that all can succeed.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Students' behaviour and personal development are good. Their positive behaviour in class and during informal times results in a calm, peaceful environment. Staff manage students' behaviour very effectively using a consistent approach, which is coupled with high expectations. Students are courteous and considerate. Their attitude to their work is good and they readily comply with teachers' requests in lessons. They are a good-natured cohesive group, taking care of each other and congratulating each other on successes. They respect adults and maintain the professional boundaries carefully laid down by the staff. They manage their own behaviour well and are aware of the needs of the group to maintain a quiet environment for learning. Incidents of poor behaviour are few.

Attendance is good and students are keen to arrive at school punctually. Their confidence and self-esteem are growing, and are demonstrated by their willingness to engage in informal discussions at break times and share their experiences. All speak very highly about their current placements at Freshsteps.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The students' diverse backgrounds are used as a resource to share ideas about different cultures and religions. The school's catering company regularly provides foods from different countries, such as Jollof rice and chicken. Students' sense of community is strong and the students work together well. Opportunities for students to reflect on their learning are not consistently provided in all lessons. Students are provided with a broad understanding of institutions in England where they can access information, such as public libraries.

Students' personal development is good, but the students are not yet provided with opportunities to develop their leadership skills or take a role of responsibility within the school.

Quality of teaching**Good**

The quality of teaching is good. A consistent approach to teaching enables all to make good progress. Teachers strive to find ways to engage the students with their studies. Praise has to be earned and is used very effectively to motivate the students. The curriculum is broken down into manageable steps so that students can see the progress they are making. Strong relationships and good management of behaviour result in peaceful lessons in which students can work and learn. Deciphering words becomes fun when incorporated into a game. One student sounded out the word 'sophisticated', while his classmates waited eagerly in case he got it wrong. Previous work is consolidated so that students build on their learning effectively. Thoughtful planning ensures that lessons are interesting and relevant. Other adults provide effective support in lessons by using questioning to help students to clarify their understanding. Marking is clear and regular, but does not always provide students with advice about the next steps to make further progress. Comments made in the marking are followed up by students and corrections are made. Homework is set that is achievable, clearly defined and linked to the lesson.

Teaching is not yet outstanding because in mixed ability groups the more able are not always sufficiently challenged to achieve more. In a few lessons, too much guidance hinders students' ability to learn independently. This results in some students relying too heavily on their teacher to provide them with the right answers.

Quality of curriculum**Good**

The alternative curriculum is good. It effectively provides students with the necessary skills, particularly numeracy and literacy, to be able to get a job or to study further at college. Students are able to achieve well. The flexible nature of the curriculum means that it can be tailored to meet the needs of the different cohorts of students. Planning takes account of any emerging needs. For example, a number of the current students were found to have very low literacy levels and much time was devoted to decoding words and developing handwriting. Students are divided into groups by ability rather than by year, and each group studies the curriculum designed to motivate and engage. This means that students who had been unable to make sufficient progress in their mainstream settings are now able to experience success. All students enjoy the work they do in class and are motivated to do more. The strength of the curriculum is that it has re-engaged students who felt they were failing. They are now keen to attend school, as demonstrated by their attendance rates, and to achieve well.

The alternative curriculum is offered with the aim of providing students with a variety of skills and experiences that encourages them to take responsibility for their learning. Additional support sessions are provided after school on an individual basis to meet identified needs. Much of the curriculum planning effectively utilises commercial schemes and examination syllabuses, for example functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT. All students follow a design and technology GCSE course. They are currently designing jewellery boxes and their individual work folders demonstrate a high degree of commitment. Biology is taught with the intention that some students will achieve a qualification equivalent to a GCSE at the end of Year 11. This was appropriately introduced at the request of students, one of whom wants to be a nurse. Students are given suitable choices in their physical education, which include swimming, boxing and sessions at the local gym. A local basketball court is used well during some break times. Personal, social and health education plays a prominent and effective role in developing students' self-awareness, self-confidence and their understanding of the wider world. Careers guidance and opportunities for work experience support students well in identifying what is it they want to do and how to get there.

The curriculum is not outstanding because it does not yet fully provide the broad and balanced provision outlined in its aims. Aspects of physics are not covered in science teaching and insufficient time is devoted to human and social studies, although these were included to some extent in a recent trip to the Natural History and Science museums.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Adequate

The school's provision for students' welfare, health and safety is adequate. All the independent school standards have been met. A minor omission, that does not significantly impinge on the safeguarding of students, has now been rectified. The school's arrangements for safeguarding and safer recruitment are now in place. All required information relating to the checks made on staff working in the school is kept on the single central register. The London Borough of Enfield, which owns the building, carries out fire risk assessments and routine checks on fire safety equipment. Fire drills are regularly conducted by the school and logged.

Policies effectively promote good behaviour and prevent bullying. The school explores bullying thoroughly through its personal, social and health education programme. Students say that they are like a large family and that there is no bullying. Sanctions for poor behaviour are used rarely and are seen to have the required impact.

Students use a local leisure centre for their physical activities, which are timetabled for two full sessions twice a week. Diligent management of journeys to the leisure centre ensures that all are safe. At the request of the students, an outside contractor has been employed to provide high quality healthy meals at lunchtime. A designated area for those who are unwell is close to the toilets and can be easily supervised.

Staff know the students well and are alert to any safeguarding issues. The excellent relationships between staff and students ensure that any concerns are followed up quickly. The school provides staff training, including for child protection and first aid, as required.

Leadership and management

Good

Leadership and management are good because the teaching enables students to make good progress. The way in which the students have re-engaged with education is notable. The school's vision of enabling students to develop skills for a working life in conjunction with high expectations of performance is shared with all the staff. All the independent school standards are met.

The school has developed good relationships with parents. One parent volunteer works closely with staff in the classroom and fully endorses the school's drive for high quality learning. Schools that place students at Freshsteps are encouraged to maintain close links with the students. A member of staff from the behaviour support team in a local secondary school confirmed the considerable progress that one of her students had made, both academically and in terms of improved behaviour. Policies are in place and practice is monitored. All the required information for parents is provided.

The school's self-evaluation is detailed and indicates areas for improvement. An advisory board supports and challenges the proprietor in leading the school. Areas for development outlined in the previous report have led to improvements. The school's premises and accommodation are suitable to enable effective learning and are maintained to a good standard. Students have raised funds locally for a national charity and are planning a sponsored swim. The reading scheme is supplemented by materials that are appropriate to the students' ages and provides good opportunities for students to enjoy their reading.

The headteacher, who is the proprietor, teaches a significant proportion of the timetable. There are weaknesses in some areas of the school's data management and in the curriculum. The

analysis of progress data is still rudimentary, although it is clear that all staff know the levels at which the students are working, and termly targets are set accordingly. The school has appropriate procedures for the management of any complaints.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	135839
Inspection number	422799
DfE registration number	308/6305

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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	Special school for students with behavioural, social and emotional needs
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	11–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Ms Diane Anderson
Headteacher	Ms Diane Anderson
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 April 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15,000–£21,000
Telephone number	020 8803 5829
Email address	admin@freshstepseducationcentre.org.uk

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