

Inspection of Freshsteps Independent school

Innova House, Kinetic Crescent, Enfield EN3 7XH

Inspection dates: 30 January to 1 February 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Parents and carers noted that 'Freshsteps Independent School is an exceptional institution...' Inspectors could not agree more. Pupils get a remarkable experience that gives them the knowledge and skills to achieve successfully, and the self-confidence to tackle adversity.

The broad curriculum is highly ambitious. As well as English, mathematics and science, pupils get to develop their creative and technological capabilities particularly effectively. For example, pupils very much enjoy their study of computing and design and technology as well as creative subjects such as textiles, music and drama.

Additional activities, such as swimming and horse riding, and visits to places like the Neasden Temple add even more to pupils' experiences. These opportunities develop pupils' positive attitudes to school, and help them manage the ups and downs of their lives very effectively. Pupils' behaviour in school is excellent. Pupils can, at times, become anxious but all adults work together extremely effectively to create a calm, respectful, positive and safe environment. Lessons are rarely, if ever, interrupted by poor behaviour.

Breaktimes and lunchtimes are civilised affairs, with pupils chatting or playing board games calmly and respectfully. Bullying is rare and pupils were confident that teachers will sort any issues quickly and effectively. Everyone is treated with respect and as an individual. This cannot be underestimated. It is one of the key things that enables pupils to achieve so well.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

A key strength of the school is consistency. This consistency is seen in the ambitious way that the curriculum is designed and implemented, and in the high expectations and aspirations of staff. It shows in the care taken to ensure that classrooms and common areas are clean and bright, and in the considerate and courteous way pupils are treated. It is evident, too, in the well-planned and rich personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, which includes relationships and sex education and careers.

Staff go the extra mile to get to know each pupil thoroughly and to establish positive relationships. They are supported by the school's 'passports' that identify pupils' needs, and the strategies to meet these, simply and concisely. Teachers use these effectively, for example by making sure that they direct the support of teaching assistants appropriately. Good opportunities for training help staff to take their expertise to the next level.

With consistency comes a whole host of other strengths. The curriculum has breadth and ambition. It provides the fundamental concepts, for example in literacy and numeracy, while still ensuring that it is adapted to meet individual needs. Pupils study up to seven subjects, including music, drama, physical education (PE), and

design and technology. Financial literacy is included as part of mathematics. Work is arranged in bite-sized chunks that build carefully on previous learning. Teachers check that pupils remember what they learned in previous lessons, going over work again to help learning 'stick' in pupils' minds. Educational trips to places of worship and art galleries, for example, enhance classroom-based work most effectively.

Reading, including phonics, has the highest priority. Across the school, for all ages, the curriculum promotes pupils' reading very well. The two well-stocked libraries include a wide range of texts and a diversity of authors. Phonics lessons are well planned and assessed. Support for reading is sensitive and skilled. In the primary classes, reading books are closely matched to the sounds that pupils are learning in phonics. Pupils become increasingly fluent readers during their time at the school.

Other strengths that come from consistency are pupils' behaviour and attitudes. All staff have the highest expectations of behaviour and pupils rise to these easily. Staff work very successfully to ensure that relationships are positive. This is one of the reasons why attendance rates are strong. Pupils very much value how the school's ethos is underpinned by them being treated with respect and politeness.

Support for pupils' well-being is another key strength. Leaders and staff provide a safe and secure place for pupils, including ensuring that they get specialist help when needed. For example, the school invests in art and speech therapy provision to support pupils' mental and physical health. Staff work closely with the local authority to make sure that pupils' needs are understood and met thoroughly.

All pupils leave the school with an accredited qualification, including those in the sixth form. This includes the 'unit award' qualification from a national examination board and sports leadership qualifications. Pupils can also study for functional skills certificates and GCSE examinations. That all pupils gain a recognised qualification is a key achievement.

In the sixth form, the opportunity for students to study vocational courses, such as catering, hairdressing, beauty and engineering, prepares them well for the world of work. The careers and employability programmes enhance this further. A range of additional vocational subjects are planned, such as motor sport engineering, which will start shortly.

The school's plans to develop the sixth-form curriculum are being carefully monitored and supported by governors to help ensure that they are sustainable. Governors use up-to-date information to support and challenge the proprietor wisely. They understand the balance between new developments and keeping teachers' workload manageable. Teachers confirmed that leaders take workload seriously.

The proprietor ensures that the independent school standards are met in full and the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	135839
DfE registration number	308/6305
Local authority	Enfield
Inspection number	10299208
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	61
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	14
Proprietor	Diane Anderson
Chair	Michael Vance
Headteacher	Diane Anderson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£33,000
Telephone number	020 8803 5827
Website	www.freshstepsindependentschool.org.uk
Email address	head@freshstepsindependentschool.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 to 28 February 2020

Information about this school

- Freshsteps provides education for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities that are primarily related to social, emotional and mental health needs. A few pupils have complex needs.
- The proprietor is also the headteacher.
- Pupils who attend the school have typically experienced difficulties in mainstream schools or have been absent from education for a long time.
- The school is registered to take up to 80 pupils from the ages of five to 18.
- All pupils at the school are funded by the local authority and have education, health and care plans.
- The school's last standard inspection was in February 2020. Its overall effectiveness was judged to be outstanding.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors considered information in relation to the proprietor's proposed request for a material change to increase the number of pupils on roll to 120.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, design and technology, and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at the wider curriculum and visited other subjects, including science, drama, music and PSHE.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor/headteacher, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the governing board.

- Inspectors considered four responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey.
- Meetings were held with some pupils to discuss their views about different aspects of their school. There were no responses to Ofsted’s pupil or staff surveys.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils’ interests first.

The school’s proposed change to the maximum number of pupils

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a ‘material change’ to its registration. At the DfE’s request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**
- The proprietor, together with other leaders, has made suitable arrangements to ensure that the premises and wider provision on offer could accommodate the proposed increase to the number of pupils, if this is approved by the registration authority.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Sean Flood

Ofsted Inspector

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