

# Inspection of a good school: Freman College

Bowling Green Lane, Buntingford, Hertfordshire SG9 9BT

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Inspection dates:

11 and 12 June 2024

## **Outcome**

Freman College continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils thrive in the friendly environment at Freman College. They are well cared for and enjoy excellent relationships with the adults. There is a strong pastoral support system in place, which gives pupils extra help if they need it. Pupils are consistently kind and respectful towards each other. They show high levels of tolerance and understanding of each other's differences. Pupils act in a manner that ensures their peers feel included and welcome.

Staff have high expectations for how well pupils should achieve and behave. Pupils know this. They appreciate that their teachers challenge and support them to do well. Pupils' behaviour is calm and orderly, in classrooms and during social time. They want to do well. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve highly in their external exams. This sets them up very well for their next stage of life.

Pupils belong to individual 'houses' and are very positive about this system. Younger pupils enjoy making friends with older students during form time. They love to compete against each other in a wide range of activities, including sports, music, art, photography and drama. Pupils support each other to do well in these competitions. There is a strong sense of team spirit within the school.

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

Leaders work well with their main feeder schools. They have ensured that from the start of Year 9 the curriculum builds in complexity, taking account of pupils' prior learning. Pupils study a wide range of subjects throughout Year 9 before selecting their GCSE option subjects. They have a rich and varied curriculum experience before beginning to specialise in their preferred areas of study. The school has ensured that there is a wide range of different courses available to students in the sixth form. This means that students study courses that are highly appropriate to their needs.

The curriculum is ambitious and delivered well across all key stages. A wide range of relevant trips are planned into the curriculum, which deepen pupils' understanding of their subjects. Teachers are skilled at planning lessons that develop pupils' understanding of the subjects they study. Teachers consistently demonstrate secure subject knowledge. They explain new information clearly and encourage pupils to share their thoughts and opinions. They question pupils frequently to check they have understood the topic. Any misunderstandings are quickly and effectively addressed. Teachers give pupils sufficient time to practise their learning, which helps them to improve. At all stages, pupils receive the support they need to achieve well.

Within curriculum plans, there are ample opportunities for teachers to use more formal assessments to check what pupils know. Teachers are well trained to do this precisely. They give pupils frequent feedback on how they are doing and how to improve. Pupils value this help and guidance.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are very well supported. They benefit from the same high-quality teaching as their peers. In addition, they may receive targeted help based on their individual needs. This can include extra reading support or focused help in lessons, for example prompts to help pupils start a task or to maintain focus on an activity.

The school has clear expectations for how pupils should behave. Pupils rise to meet these high standards. They attend regularly, and staff are quick to intervene if a pupil's attendance drops. Incidents of poor behaviour are extremely uncommon. If they do occur, staff take appropriate action to ensure that the normal high standards of conduct quickly resume. Pupils display high levels of self-control. Sometimes, teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to develop their resilience or confidence in their learning. For example, pupils can be over-reliant on their teachers' direction rather than demonstrating high levels of independence and motivation towards their tasks.

There is a comprehensive programme in place to support pupils with their personal development and careers education. Adults teach pupils about the different jobs available to them. Pupils learn about university and apprenticeship courses. They are taught the importance of democracy and respect. Their spiritual development is nurtured. Pupils have a strong knowledge of other religions. As well as the wide range of activities on offer through house competitions, pupils also develop their interests and skills through the enrichment opportunities. Art, cricket, rugby, chess and music are popular activities that many pupils enjoy and attend regularly.

Leaders, including governors, know the school well. They take effective action to make continued improvements to the school where needed. Staff and parents are extremely complimentary about the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to develop their resilience or confidence. Consequently, pupils are passive in their learning and reluctant to take risks. They remain in their comfort zone rather than push themselves. The school needs to ensure that pupils receive the support they need to build their confidence and motivation in all lessons.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2015.

## 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.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137002
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10345313
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	994
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	232
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Jackie Martin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Loughran
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.freman.org.uk">www.freman.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This school is the only member of the single academy trust.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in this evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history, art and science. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector visited a range of lessons to look at pupils' behaviour in a range of subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 lead inspector met with the chair of governors and reviewed documentation relating to school improvement.
- The inspectors reviewed attendance records, held discussions with leaders about pupil behaviour and observed pupils' behaviour around site.
- The lead inspector met with leaders to discuss the school's approach to pupils' personal development.
- The inspectors met with groups of pupils from different years to hear their views about school.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. They also reviewed responses to Ofsted's staff survey and Ofsted's pupil survey.

### **Inspection team**

Bessie Owen, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Lawrence

Ofsted Inspector

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