

Frederick Bremer School

Siddeley Road, Walthamstow, London E17 4EY

Inspection dates

8–9 December 2015

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires Improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has been relentless in driving improvement over the last three years. As a result, the quality of teaching is increasingly strong and pupils are making rapid progress.
- Other leaders and managers, including governors, have not flinched from taking the school through a challenging period of change.
- The school's systems for holding staff to account and for tracking pupils' attainment and progress are now robust.
- GCSE results are not significantly different to the national average. In 2015, pupils' rates of progress improved further and were significantly above average for pupils. The school was in the top 25% of schools nationally.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. They enjoy being a part of the strong inclusive school community and have confidence in each other.
- Effective provision is in place for pupils with a statement of special educational needs and for those with an education, health and care plan. Alternative provision is also well planned.
- The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in the school is closing quickly.
- Safeguarding provision is strong. Pupils are well informed about keeping safe; they feel safe in the school.
- The curriculum provides breadth and balance. Opportunities to learn to play an instrument; take part in enrichment activities and travel abroad cultivate their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Parents are supportive and appreciative of the school's work.
- Partnership work with other schools and businesses is strong.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good or better in all departments to ensure that pupils can achieve as well as they can.
- The quality of marking and pupils' pride in their work and presentation skills are not consistently good. Marking is intermittent and does not help pupils to improve their work further.
- Speaking skills are not well developed to enable pupils to engage fully in formal conversations.
- The most-able pupils are not all meeting or exceeding the highest grades in the GCSE examinations.
- Pupils with special educational needs have lower attendance and higher rates of exclusions.
- Middle leaders are enterprising, but new to their roles and require more time to develop their leadership and management skills.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching consistently good or better in all departments by:
 - ensuring that the quality of marking is consistently good in all subjects, so that pupils know what they need to do to improve the quality and take pride in the presentation of their work
 - making sure the most-able pupils are challenged to make better progress that will contribute to them achieving the highest GCSE grades, A* to A
 - developing pupils' oral skills so that they can confidently engage in a range of conversations outside their day-to-day experiences
 - ensuring that mastery in the core subjects of English and mathematics, particularly in mathematics, is well developed in all subjects.
- Improve the quality and consistency of middle leaders by:
 - equipping them with the right skills to lead, manage and sustain the improvements made
 - providing opportunities for them to draw on best practice found beyond the school.
- Improve the attendance rate and the fixed rate exclusions of different groups of pupils, in particular all groups of pupils with special educational needs.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, very well supported by other senior leaders and the governing body, has taken the school on a very long and extremely challenging journey to improve its effectiveness. They have worked together as a cohesive team to overcome the challenges faced.
- As a result, the school is now a better place. The new and ambitious culture of high expectations has replaced mediocrity. Since the previous inspection, the determination and energy shown by the headteacher and the governors in addressing matters affecting the efficiency of the school led to a high turnover of staff. Despite the challenges, senior leaders were not distracted and pursued their aim to build a successful school. Staffing is now stable.
- The senior leaders have gained the loyalty of staff. There is commitment to pupils realising the school's vision and values to 'aspire', 'believe' in themselves and work well in an environment that allows them to 'create' and nurture their talents.
- The new senior leadership team has worked relentlessly to transform the school through regularly monitoring teaching, both formally and informally. Professional development is continuous. There is a very good blend of training linked to the needs of the school as a corporate body, departments, and groups such as middle leaders or newly qualified teachers. Clear targeting of needs and regular feedback have helped to develop good teaching in most departments.
- Effective partnership work with outstanding and good schools is used effectively to support departments and individuals to improve teaching and leadership and management skills. It is too early to measure the full impact of this work, but emerging evidence shows that staff are deriving many benefits in developing good practice.
- Performance management is now well structured. This provides staff with opportunities to review their targets regularly and ensure they are meeting their challenging targets linked to pupils' progress and predicted examination results. Salary progression takes place only when targets are met and well evidenced.
- The school's leaders are working on developing new middle leaders and new aspirant teachers who are innovative, to become future leaders. The training and cycle of improvement has still to show the full impact; more time is needed to complete the programme. Succession planning is very well considered. Assessment information is well managed to track and analyse the achievement of different groups of pupils, by gender and ethnicity. This ensures that pupils have equal opportunities to achieve well, as support is linked to their specific need. Staff accountability for pupils' achievement is linked to a chain of command beginning with middle leaders, senior line managers, through to the headteacher and, ultimately, the governing body.
- Planning for improvement is extensive and involves the leadership team searching out best practice in schools out of borough to support the school's development.
- The curriculum has been developed to provide a wider choice of subjects in both key stages and opportunities for pupils to access the creative subjects, in particular, the Music in Secondary Schools Trust (MiSST) programme. This provides pupils with excellent opportunities to perform at The Barbican Concert Hall, and experience musical genres outside their experience.
- The school's specialist status in engineering is central to the science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics programme (STEAM) in Key Stage 3. This is intended to raise academic attainment and the quality of cross-curricular projects. The offer is developed beyond the school day and more work is planned to support pupils' understanding of the links between subjects. Since the previous inspection, the reorganised curriculum means that an increasing number of pupils are now taking more academic subjects, reflecting national policy. Provision for careers advice is thorough. Systems for tracking and placing pupils on work experience placements are methodical and tailored to needs.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development provides them with insight into different belief systems, customs and practices. The development of pupils' social skills is integral to the school's ethos and values and linked to the many enrichment activities provided. Pupils' awareness of moral issues is a particular strength, particularly as the school covers a broad range of topics that forces them to think about moral dilemmas and decisions. For example, the recent organisation of trips to Europe through the modern foreign languages department contributes very well to pupils' development.
- The additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used well to provide a range of programmes and additional staff to improve outcomes. Regular review and monitoring of the funding ensures that the school has a good grasp of the impact of the funding on accelerating pupils' progress against other pupils

nationally and the average of other pupils in the school.

- The special educational needs department is well led and managed. The emphasis on good-quality teaching and support, tracking pupils' progress and training and monitoring staff to meet the needs of pupils with additional needs, ensures that the provision runs smoothly. Transition planning to post-16 is well planned, particularly for pupils with a statement and/or an education, health and care plan.
- Whereas there is a clear strategic plan for using the catch-up funding to promote reading, this is not the case for numeracy because of previous difficulties with staffing; this is now being tackled.
- The local authority has worked closely with senior leaders to provide training for staff and governors, and support with budget and human resource management.
- Safeguarding practices are a strength with exemplary practices in recording and increasing pupils' understanding of a wide range of safeguarding matters. Consequently, pupils are very aware of topical discussions on all aspects of the 'Prevent' duty (government advice to schools to have due regard to the need to identify signs of extremism and radicalism).
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are very well informed about the school's work. They use their experience and expertise to strengthen the school's work, provide support for pupils, and challenge and hold the school to account for pupils' progress. They ensure that the school is a dynamic community serving the locality. Links to subjects are used very well. Visit records are thorough and sharply focused on specific aims as they seek to find out more about departments and hold them to account.
 - Governors, as critical friends, also act as enablers and benefactors to pupils. They provide additional support, and use their extensive links to increase pupils' understanding of the corporate world. As a result, two pupils who participated in the Simmons and Simmons Young Talent programme became the first recipients of university bursaries from the company.
 - The governors have worked very well with the headteacher and local authority to reduce the budget deficit and make sure that the school is better placed to maintain the changes made.
 - Governors keep pupils' progress under review and are well versed in reading and analysing assessment information. They are knowledgeable about the impact of the pupil premium funding and ensure that the performance of all groups, as well as their attendance and any exclusions are kept under scrutiny. Records of meetings show that governors challenge senior leaders, ask searching questions and seek out information independently. Educationalists on the governing body take a lead in ensuring that information received is accurate and exemplified.
 - Governors ensure that safeguarding requirements are met. Training on the 'Prevent' duties is planned for early next year.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Since the previous inspection, much has been done to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Regular and increased monitoring of teaching, with feedback, has contributed to identifying where the strengths lie and which areas need to improve. This ensures that staff development training is tailored to needs.
- Good subject knowledge and teacher expertise are used very well to help pupils make better progress over time and consolidate learning.
- Teachers have a range of background information on the starting points of each pupil and their specific additional needs. Those who enter without information on their prior learning are assessed on entry. The information available enables teachers to set challenging targets in every subject that pupils are expected to achieve by the end of each school year, particularly in Year 11.
- Discussions with pupils, work in their books and the teaching seen all confirm that teaching is good overall. This has been possible because of the training and support provided for staff, all of which are linked to developing pupils' enthusiasm to learn.
- Pupils are very clear about the characteristics of teaching that contribute to them learning well. They told inspectors that they are challenged when lessons are fun, well planned, teachers are passionate about their subjects and can explain clearly so that they understand the subject. Above all, as a Year 7 pupil indicated: 'Teachers' relationships with pupils are very important.' Across the school, relationships with staff are strong.

- Teachers reinforce high expectations of work and behaviour, which leads to pupils settling to work quickly. Other key features of teaching that contribute to pupils' learning well include skilful questioning that encourages pupils to justify their viewpoints. Equally good learning was evident when time was not wasted, pace was quick and pupils moved smoothly from one activity to the next. Teachers use short intervals well to question pupils. These brief moments provide an opportunity for them to assess pupils' learning, deal with misconceptions and build on learning by demonstrating what has to be completed.
- Across the school, the teaching of English and mathematics ensures that most groups of pupils can make good progress over time in these core subjects. As a result, all groups of pupils are very well prepared for the next phase of their education.
- The teaching of pupils with special educational needs, including those with a statement of education or an education, health and care plan, is generally good. Teachers know the needs of each pupil well and because they are supported they keep up with their peers.
- The quality of marking is not consistent in subjects and across the school. Staff do not routinely follow the school policy to ensure that pupils are given quality feedback and can respond to comments. Too many books and homework are not marked for a long time. Pupils wish to see a change because they are of the opinion that the feedback is not good enough to help them improve their work.
- Senior leaders know that there is unevenness in the quality of teaching in some subjects where the school's expectations are not being met consistently. This is being dealt with rigorously. There is also an awareness that outcomes for some groups of pupils, in particular the most-able and pupils with special educational needs, are not high enough. Although pupils told inspectors that they are suitably challenged, inspection evidence did not support this view that there is a consistent approach to stretching the most-able.
- Teachers do not all use talk effectively to encourage pupils to explain their ideas at length. For example, in some subjects, questioning is not used well enough to test pupils' understanding and increase their communication skills. Teachers do not always ensure that they give pupils enough time to think deeply about their learning by ensuring that they can think through their responses.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school is an orderly learning environment, which pupils refer to as 'peaceful'. Inspectors agree. Relationships are positive and the strong community spirit leads to pupils working very well together.
- They are keen to learn, and those spoken to about their future ambitions aspire to enter university and key professions. Pupils are self-assured and display positive attitudes at all times. They demonstrate the ability to work without the constant supervision of teachers, evident when, for example, Year 10 pupils worked on programming under the supervision of a supply member of staff.
- Pupils are very responsive to the different types of support provided by adults such as support staff, including behaviour mentors, home school officers or the school counsellor. They are confident they can turn to adults in the school should they have a need to do so.
- Pupils relish the responsibilities that they hold as mentors, prefects or as school councillors and, more recently, the school leadership sports programme. They use their position well to represent the school and influence decisions that affect their lives. For example, they have initiated change in relation to regulating the speed with which lunch is served and the use of the large open space in the hall.
- They are aware how to keep safe and how to handle any worries they might have. They are fully aware of the supportive systems in place at the school and know they can find the help and support needed.
- They are responsive to the well-developed information, advice and careers guidance provided. Pupils are proud of their community school, which promotes all aspects of their well-being.
- Attendance is in line with the national average for secondary school. However, it is below average for pupils with special educational needs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school has maintained, and built on, the good-quality behaviour found at the last inspection.
- Pupils' positive attitudes for learning means that they work engagingly and maintain concentration. They

move sensibly around the school and even when there is any congestion, around the stairwell, they are very responsive to staff on duty. They cooperate very well at all times, including lunchtime.

- Pupils usually arrive promptly to lessons but a few are not punctual to some lessons. Staff do not always check on the lateness of pupils.
- A few pupils are known to disrupt lessons, but in the main, the vast majority are responsive. Exclusions have fallen, but some groups are over-represented as repeat offenders. The in-school exclusion room is monitored well.
- Pupils know about the different types of bullying and speak out against any form of bullying, in particular, discriminatory treatment such as using the word 'gay' to tease others. They say that, if bullying occurs, it is dealt with promptly. They feel safe in their school, and the high visibility of staff, and other measures, reassure them of their safety. Parents agree with their children that they are safe in the school and well cared for.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The school has successfully sustained and improved further the progress pupils make each school year. Outcomes in 2015 were the best achieved over the last four years. Across subjects, including in English and mathematics, most pupils made strong progress. This placed the school in the top 25% of all schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils obtaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was not significantly different from the national average. This was slightly better than in 2013 and 2014. The subjects in which pupils performed particularly well included English, information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, performing arts and physical education. Progress in science and humanities was also above average; however, instability in staffing has affected teaching in these subjects. Staffing in every subject is now stable and previous gaps in pupils' learning are being successfully addressed.
- The school's current assessment information indicates that pupils are on track to achieve similar standards to those obtained in 2015. The school's information shows that higher outcomes are expected in English and particularly in mathematics. However, mastery in mathematics is not always evident. Pupils were not seen being challenged to think and reason or grapple with concepts without their teachers' support.
- Leaders are aware that pupils' speaking skills are less well developed in comparison to their reading and writing skills. Pupils readily talk with visitors but extended formal conversation is not a strength. Writing skills are well developed in English but opportunities for extended writing across subjects are not consistently evident.
- Pupils with special educational needs make average progress but are behind their peers in the school.
- The in-school gaps are greater in English than in mathematics for this group. Very good support in lessons contributes to all pupils with special educational needs making suitable progress.
- Pupils who attend the off-site alternative provision regularly make good progress in completing the alternative vocational courses offered. The school visits these pupils regularly, monitors their progress, attendance and behaviour and ensures they are all safe.
- In 2015, disadvantaged pupils made significantly above-average progress that exceeded the national average. In lessons, their work rate and progress is similar to their peers in the class. Assessment information shows that although the attainment gap is closing quickly, the gap with the other pupils nationally remains.
- Higher-attaining pupils achieved results that were not significantly above the national average. The school provides a range of enrichment activities to motivate this group but is aware that more could be exceeding expected progress based on their starting points.
- The school has identified that some groups of pupils, particularly White British pupils and those of African and Caribbean background, made slower progress than their peers in the school in 2015. The gaps between groups are much smaller than they were in 2015 as a result of the much better teaching and support in place.

School details

Unique reference number	103094
Local authority	Walthamstow
Inspection number	10001965

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	868
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michelle Hegarty
Headteacher	Jenny Smith
Telephone number	020 8498 3340
Website	www.bremer.org.uk
Email address	admin@bremer.waltham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 September 2013

Information about this school

- Frederick Bremer is a smaller than average-sized secondary school and has more boys than girls.
- The school serves a diverse community. The four largest groups of pupils include those of Pakistani, White British, White European and African heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or looked after by the local authority) is much higher than that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils requiring special educational needs support is above average. The proportion with a special educational needs statement or an education and health care plan is high in comparison with the national average. The school has an autism resource centre which provides for 19 pupils with autism.
- The school works with other schools and colleges to provide alternative provision for seven pupils at the following: Epping Forest College; The Hawkswood Centre; Conel College; Waltham Forest College; and Big Creative Education.
- The school works jointly with the local teaching school alliance and with the following good or outstanding schools in neighbouring authorities to develop a range of leadership and teaching projects: Little Ilford School and Seven Kings School.
- The school does not use early entry to GCSE examinations.
- The school's 2015 GCSE results met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum level expected for pupils' progress and attainment.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching in 41 lessons. Thirty one of these were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with senior staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, four groups of pupils, a representative from the local authority and a few parents. They also took into consideration a letter from the Music in Secondary Schools Trust (MiSST).
- Inspectors took account of 93 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), including the free text question responses. A meeting was also held with a few parents. The inspectors took into account 70 questionnaires completed by staff and the 140 responses to the online questionnaire for pupils.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation. They scrutinised a range of documentation. This included the school's assessment information on pupils' progress, the self-evaluation and development plan, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, various evidence of systems for protecting pupils, and minutes and records of the governing body's work in the school.

Inspection team

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