

Inspection of a good school: Friern Barnet School

Hemington Avenue, Friern Barnet, London N11 3LS

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 February 2024

Outcome

Friern Barnet School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a welcoming, inclusive school. Pupils from different backgrounds and cultures and with a range of needs learn together successfully.

Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum that develops their understanding of the world around them. The personal development programme is well planned and comprehensive. This includes a student-led podcast where pupils discuss important topics such as relationships, friendships and puberty.

The school strives to provide the same high-quality education to all pupils. The school's specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) supports pupils' development well. Pupils with SEND are fully included and well supported to take part in school life. Leaders ensure that pupils are kept safe and happy.

Pupils who need it benefit from carefully tailored support in the school's 'inclusion hub' to help them to improve their behaviour. New classroom routines mean that pupils behave well in lessons. Pupils recognise the improvements to behaviour in lessons. Most pupils have confidence that any bullying issues will be dealt with well.

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

All pupils study an ambitious curriculum. Leaders have identified the key knowledge they want pupils to learn. The curriculum is logically and coherently planned and builds pupils' knowledge well over time. The school's English Baccalaureate entry level is currently below average though it is increasing. Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the school and its current strengths and weaknesses. Staff benefit from extensive training and professional development.

Teachers explain new knowledge clearly. Most teachers devise useful activities to help pupils remember key information securely. Pupils appreciate the efforts that teachers make to help them. Typically, teachers build in time to check what pupils know and can

do. Sometimes, systems to check and address any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are not precise. This limits pupils' readiness to learn new content.

Leaders share detailed information with teachers about how they can meet the needs of individual pupils. Many pupils with SEND learn well because they benefit from high-quality teaching. Staff adapt learning for pupils with SEND effectively. The school works closely with primary schools, to help pupils to make a smooth transition to secondary school.

Staff identify pupils who struggle with their reading when they join the school. A reading programme is implemented effectively to ensure that all pupils who are at the early stages of reading learn to read fluently.

Pupils largely demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. Disruption in lessons is rare. However, outside of the classroom, the behaviour of some pupils falls short of leaders' expectations. This is because some pupils' behaviour during social times, including in the playground and corridors, can be boisterous. Some pupils find this unsettling. The school recognised the need to address the behaviour of some pupils after the pandemic and continue to address this. Most pupils can identify an adult they can turn to if they are concerned. They appreciated the school's online reporting system.

Leaders follow up on any pupils whose attendance is a concern. They prioritise their work with families and external agencies to gain a strong understanding of the causes of poor attendance.

The personal development programme is broad and includes coverage of healthy relationships, financial planning, identity, and staying safe online. Pupils take on responsibilities through the student parliament. Many pupils talk confidently about equality and diversity. Parents and carers are positive about the school. They like its caring and supportive ethos.

Pupils receive appropriate careers advice and work experience. This helps them to know what opportunities are available beyond school. A variety of talks and workshops ensure that pupils are well informed of their future options and build important employability skills.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Opportunities to address pupils' misconceptions or gaps in knowledge are sometimes missed. This limits pupils' deeper knowledge and understanding of subject content. The school should ensure that teachers check carefully pupils' prior understanding so that they are fully ready for new learning.

- Sometimes, in corridors and at social times, pupils do not regulate their own behaviour well. This means that behaviour in corridors and playground can occasionally be boisterous. The school should ensure that its high expectations of behaviour are met beyond the classroom so that unsupervised times are calm, orderly and purposeful.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2018.

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 special educational needs and/or disabilities (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

Unique reference number	101345
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10323280
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	724
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Ann Woodhall
Headteacher	Simon Horne
Website	www.friern.barnet.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	30 and 31 October 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school operates a SEND resource base to provide support for pupils with cognition and learning needs.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers.
- The school experiences significant changes to the pupil cohort with a high proportion of pupils arriving mid-year. A significant proportion of these arrivals are new to English.
- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, 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.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, pupils, and staff, including through responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Sam Johnson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jonathan Newby

Ofsted Inspector

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