

Frome Vale Academy

Frenchay Road, Downend, Bristol, BS16 2QS

Inspection dates

8–9 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The academy has made strong progress in all areas of its work. The Executive Principal, supported by senior leaders and the Academy Council, has expertly led this academy through a period of difficult changes. The whole academy community are determined to drive forward further improvement quickly.
- Pupils now achieve well. Previous lost ground is being made up quickly. By the time they leave the academy in Year 6, most pupils are reaching the levels expected for their ages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is typically good and a small proportion is outstanding. Pupils are making good progress in catching up to where they need to be.
- Children achieve very well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make rapid progress.
- Pupils are well cared for and feel valued. Highly effective arrangements are in place to support pupils in this inclusive academy. They feel safe and secure, and are proud of their academy. Parents and carers support this view.
- The Cabot Learning Federation has provided good support and guidance for Frome Vale Academy. This has significantly speeded up the pace of recovery to become a good academy.
- Pupils who are eligible for additional funding, and those who receive support with their learning, make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They enjoy school and behave well in and around the academy. The Executive Principal's relentless drive to improve behaviour ensures pupils learn well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not yet outstanding. Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. This slows pupils' progress in a few lessons.
- Attendance is just below the national average. Systems to check absence and holiday requests are not always rigorous enough.
- Marking of books and feedback to pupils in some lessons does not always help them know and understand how to improve their work. There are not always sufficient opportunities for pupils to act on teachers' comments.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons. Four observations were carried out jointly with the Executive Principal and senior leaders at the academy. Inspectors observed an assembly and talked to parents and carers at the start and end of each day. They visited the breakfast club.
- Inspectors spoke informally to pupils, including at breaktimes and lunchtimes, heard some read, and met with a group to find out their views about the school.
- Meetings were held with the Executive Principal, Associate Principal, leaders, staff and councillors including the Chair of the Academy Council. A further meeting was held with the Chief Executive Officer of the Cabot Learning Federation.
- There were too few responses on the online questionnaire Parent View to consider. Information on the academy’s website, and 14 questionnaires completed by staff, were analysed.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the academy’s plans for improvement, records of lesson observations, information on pupils’ progress, work in pupils’ books, and reports of behaviour incidents and attendance. Inspectors also scrutinised the academy’s safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Catherine Leahy, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Lesley Voaden

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Frome Vale is an average-sized academy.
- In September 2012, Frome Vale Academy became a sponsor-led academy, becoming part of the Cabot Learning Federation.
- The Executive Principal took up her post in October 2013. The Associate Principal has been supporting this academy since January 2013. She was appointed as the academy's full-time Associate Principal in June 2014. Both Principals have been recruited from neighbouring Cabot Learning Federation academies.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average; a quarter of all pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is above average. This is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible to receive free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The academy has a daily breakfast club which is run by the Academy Council.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching to raise achievement further by:
 - making sure expectations of what pupils can achieve are always high
 - ensuring marking and feedback consistently inform pupils how well they have done and what they need to do to improve
 - giving regular opportunities for pupils to act on marking and feedback so that pupils can make improvements to their work.
- Raise attendance to above the national average by:
 - refining the academy's systems to monitor and follow up absences including the small number of holiday requests.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards of attainment and rates of progress are now good. The academy is rigorously tackling previous underachievement. This means all pupils have an equal chance to do well.
- Children join the academy in the Reception class with skills and understanding that are typically low for their age, particularly in language and communication. Teachers plan children's next steps carefully so that they make very good progress. Those who start school with little experience of speaking English learn their new language quickly. As a result, they develop their literacy and numeracy skills well.
- The emphasis on language development, literacy and numeracy continues into Year 1. This ensures pupils' basic skills develop well. Pupils quickly learn to use their phonics knowledge of letters and sounds to tackle unknown words. Most pupils reached the standards expected in the Year 1 phonics check in 2014.
- Pupils in Year 2 make good progress. Although standards are below average at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils achieve well from their low starting points. Good teaching and a high level of care enable these pupils to achieve well.
- Attainment for the current Year 6 pupils shows that standards have significantly improved in 2014 in English and mathematics. Inspection evidence and school records show that from low starting points, most have reached standards which are in line with those expected for their age. A small proportion have made better than expected progress in reading and a third of all pupils have done so in mathematics. This is because teaching is improving rapidly in the academy.
- The academy's information shows that Year 5 pupils are on track to reach the levels expected for their age at the end of Key Stage 2. This represents a considerable improvement for these pupils. They are making up lost ground rapidly.
- Although some inconsistencies remain between year groups, an increasing proportion of pupils are making good progress. This is particularly true for pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language. An increasing proportion are making better than expected progress.
- The most-able pupils are also increasingly making good progress. The opportunities provided for all pupils to use their skills across a range of subjects are enabling them to achieve the higher levels in English and mathematics.
- Pupils who are eligible for the additional government funding are making good progress. The academy is investing heavily in staffing to provide high-quality intervention and support. Consequently, most of these pupils achieve as well as their classmates. A few achieve better in some year groups. The academy is successfully closing the very wide attainment gap which was evident last year. No child is discriminated against.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from low starting points. Well-tailored literacy and numeracy interventions, closely linked to their next steps in learning, are improving these pupils' achievement.
- Progress in reading and writing is improving quickly. The academy's sharp focus on developing pupils' literacy skills has successfully promoted their love for reading. Pupils now read and enjoy a wide range of texts. They read with expression and understanding.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding because occasionally, teachers do not always expect the highest quality work from their pupils. In these lessons, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should, which slows their progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in the academy is good and a small proportion is outstanding. Teachers are, without exception, determined to continue to improve their skills. This is having a direct impact on the

good progress now seen and the impressive rise in attainment across the academy.

- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils respond quickly to their instructions and no learning time is lost. The positive and calm atmosphere in the school encourages pupils to learn well.
- Teaching in the Reception classes is consistently good. Children develop as happy and confident learners. The Early Years Foundation Stage team carefully plans activities which help every child learn well. As a result, children are engaged with their learning and they make very good progress, particularly in reading and writing. They move into Year 1 with the skills they need to continue to learn successfully.
- Teachers plan interesting lessons which excite and motivate pupils. They help pupils to understand what they are learning so that pupils make good progress, particularly in English.
- Effective questioning encourages pupils to think deeply. Pupils are given time to explain their thinking through their answers. This makes the lessons challenging, particularly for the most-able pupils, which increases their chances of achieving the higher levels.
- Teaching assistants provide valuable support, especially for disabled pupils or those with special educational needs, and those eligible for extra funding. The focused teaching and care they give to pupils who need sensitive support to manage their behaviour is effective. These pupils achieve well and feel valued in their school community.
- The strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills through regular homework is having a positive effect on raising standards. Parents and carers support reading at home, which strengthens the links between the academy and home. Some pupils choose to do their homework in the academy's club, which supports this activity. This ensures all pupils have equal chances to achieve well.
- Some marking helps pupils understand how well they have done, and what they need to do to improve. This helps pupils, including the most able, to achieve well. However, the academy's marking guidelines are not being used consistently in all classes. Opportunities to provide feedback to pupils in lessons are sometimes missed, which slows their pace of learning. The quality of teaching is therefore not yet outstanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This includes behaviour in lessons and around the academy. On taking up her appointment, the Executive Principal prioritised the urgent need to improve pupils' behaviour. Previously, staff reported that behaviour was so poor pupils did not learn well. Consequently, few made good progress, and parents and carers were rightly concerned.
- The unrelenting focus on improving behaviour by the whole staff team means that the academy has undergone a transformation, and standards of behaviour are now good. Pupils respond positively to clear and consistent routines. The calm atmosphere enables them to work hard and achieve well. Pupils have great pride in being a part of Frome Vale Academy.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The pupils know how to keep safe on the internet. They act safely around the academy, including on the stairs and in the long corridors. Pupils told inspectors they can turn to any member of staff if they feel hurt or upset. Bullying is treated seriously, although pupils consider that bullying is rare.
- Pupils have a good understanding of religious and cultural diversity. Pupils lead class assemblies to deepen their understanding further and this strengthens their respect for each other. They work and play together harmoniously developing strong friendships and positive relationships. The new 'playtime pods' give pupils exciting opportunities to use their imagination constructively. This equipment enriches pupils' playtime experiences.
- Serious incidents leading to exclusions are rare. This is in sharp contrast to the numbers of exclusions recorded last year. The academy keeps careful records of pupils' behaviour, informing parents and carers of continuing poor behaviour to support improvements. As a result, recorded incidents of poor behaviour have significantly reduced.

- Pupils eligible for extra funding are invited to attend the well-run breakfast club. They enjoy a settled start to their day, which helps them learn well in their classes.
- Attendance remains below the national average. The academy accepts the need to refine its systems further when monitoring absences. Therefore, behaviour is not yet outstanding. Staff at the academy work with parents and carers to explain the importance of bringing their child to school every day and not taking holidays in term time. Parents and carers are increasingly recognising its importance in improving their child's achievement.

The leadership and management are good

- The exceptional leadership of the Executive Principal and the newly appointed Associate Principal is bringing about significant change. Their first priorities, to improve attainment in Year 6 and to rapidly improve behaviour, have been successfully achieved. Their vision and drive have led to rapid and sustained improvements in this academy. This has earned them the respect of the staff, and parents and carers. The staff questionnaires are extremely positive about all aspects of the academy's work. Morale is high.
- The academy's self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders have identified the academy's strengths and the next steps needed for improvement. Academy councillors rigorously hold leaders to account to ensure improvements are made rapidly. As a result, teaching is improving and standards are rising. The capacity for further improvement is strong.
- The procedures to manage staff performance have been strengthened. All staff targets are closely linked to the standards expected of teachers. This is ensuring pupils make at least good progress. Underperformance is tackled robustly. Well-organised support from within the academy and from across the federation is enabling teaching to improve quickly.
- Middle leaders with responsibility for subjects are knowledgeable about the academy's performance. They check quality of teaching, work in books and pupils' progress information. The introduction of strategies to address previously weak standards in literacy have improved pupils' reading and writing skills in all year groups. Examples of high-quality writing were seen during this inspection as evidence that standards are rising quickly. Pupils confirm they enjoy reading and like to choose books from the library.
- Subjects are well taught through a range of interesting topics such as 'The Titanic' and 'Antarctica'. The learning is supported through a wide range of trips and concerts to bring the learning alive. This makes a very positive contribution to developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All pupils attend these trips and events, including the recent Year 6 residential to Wales. Equality of opportunity underpins everything provided for the pupils.
- The positive impact of the very strong links between the academies in the Cabot Learning Federation and the high-quality support which it offers is clear from the short time it has taken to turn itself around. Both the Executive Principal and Associate Principal were recruited through the federation. The skills and experience they bring to this academy, well supported by subject leaders, are ensuring that the academy continues to improve.
- The sports funding provides specialist coaches to train staff in delivering high-quality physical education. They also run a wide range of clubs to extend pupils' skills such as fencing. The increased number of clubs has resulted in a growing number of pupils taking part in competitive events. These have provided opportunities to spot and nurture pupils' talents.
- Additional funding is used wisely so that pupils achieve well. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. The academy pays close attention to the needs of these pupils, putting in extra support in lessons. Vulnerable pupils receive very good support in the 'Thrive' classroom. This is helping them to manage their own behaviour well and attend school regularly. Incidents of serious misbehaviour have been reduced. This provision is valued by parents and carers, and staff, and is making a positive contribution to all pupils' good behaviour. Leaders, staff and councillors ensure there is no discrimination and everyone has an equal chance to enjoy achieving.

- Leadership and management are not outstanding because there is not yet enough outstanding teaching to ensure pupils' achievement rises to the highest levels and all previous underachievement is eliminated.
- Safeguarding requirements are fully met. The academy is rigorous in ensuring all pupils are safe. Leaders have created a safe and calm environment in which good behaviour and good learning can flourish.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. The Academy Council is working closely with academy leaders to address the legacy of underachievement and to rapidly improve this academy. The Chair of the Academy Council and all councillors share leaders' determination and drive to improve. They visit the academy regularly and have a clear understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for development. They are well informed and use this knowledge about pupils' progress and quality of teaching to challenge leaders rigorously. This is balanced with an appropriate level of support, particularly during a period of significant change, to ensure improvements made can be sustained. The Cabot Learning Federation Board has provided further training and support to ensure that the right decisions have been taken, particularly in regard to staffing changes. This is having a very positive impact on driving improvements at an appropriate pace.
 - Councillors hold leaders and staff to account for their performance. They are increasingly linking teachers' performance and their pay effectively. This approach includes the senior leaders, including the Executive Principal. Councillors ensure that the academy's resources are used well to secure improvement. They are rigorous in checking that the pupil premium funding is being used well. They know the gap between the progress of these pupils and that of their classmates is closing, or has already closed in some year groups. The use of sports funding is discussed to ensure rising numbers of pupils attend clubs and they are learning new skills.
 - All safeguarding policies and procedures meet safeguarding requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138791
Local authority	Bristol City of
Inspection number	440109

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy Sponsor Led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brigid Allen
Principal	Mandy Milsom
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0117 353 2902
Fax number	0117 353 2906
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