

Frederick Bird Primary School



Who works harder in a school – the children or the teachers? If you had asked us that question a couple of years ago, the answer would definitely have been the teachers; now we hope the answer is the children.



REPORT CARD

- » Headteacher: Juliet Silverton
- » Location: Hillfields, Coventry
- » Ofsted rating: Good
- » Pupils on roll: 820
- » 42 teachers, 34 teaching assistants
- » EAL: 77%
- » Pupil Premium: 46%

When Headteacher Juliet Silverton arrived in January 2015, the school was graded as Good by Ofsted but, whilst they were extremely well looked after, children were not all meeting their full academic potential. One of the main things that teachers highlighted as a barrier to progress was the passivity of many of the children. We are on a journey to change this.

Frederick Bird serves an extremely diverse and disadvantaged area: pupils start Foundation Stage with attainment below national expectations, and over 40 languages are spoken, with over three quarters of pupils speaking English as an additional language. The local population has a high level of transience, which means pupils join every year with minimal English. The majority of new arrivals are the children of refugees or asylum seekers, with many pupils of Gypsy Roma heritage from Eastern Europe. While many families are deprived financially and educationally, our motto 'Aspire and Achieve' reflects our belief that all our children can succeed. However, given the barriers that learners and their families can face, some may need more intensive support – and belief – to reach government targets.

A strong foundation

'Frederick Bird University', a weekly opportunity to learn skills beyond the basic curriculum, forms a part of this intensive support. Experiencing such diverse subjects as cake making, musical theatre and taekwondo allows all children to gain confidence; it is this confidence that we are developing as we encourage them to lead their own learning.

The journey begins: children leading their own learning

Children at our school lead their own learning in various ways:

- » We have embraced the principles of Growth Mindset, celebrating effort and progress and emphasising that all learners can improve. This has led to a huge shift in children's attitudes; across school, 'I can't do it' has now been replaced by 'I can't do it... yet'!
- » Rather than being told what tasks they should do in lessons, children are offered a choice of tasks, from 'bronze' (straightforward) to 'platinum' (deepening and applying their learning). While they occasionally need to be steered towards an appropriate choice, it is clear that children are motivated by the autonomy they now have – often pushing themselves beyond the challenge the teacher would have given them.
- » Our foundation subjects are delivered in 'integrated afternoons' when the teacher works directly with one small group while all the others learn independently. Their thematic activities are practical and engaging, including some enquiries developing from the children's own questions as well as an integration of core subjects.
- » A year ago we took the brave – some said crazy – decision to give every child in Year 5 an iPad for the year. Not only does this give our children access to technology that they may not otherwise have had, it also magnifies their learning opportunities and develops personal responsibility, and indeed pride.
- » To make sure our children work harder than their teachers, we have adopted many of Isabella Wallace's strategies from *Talk-Less Teaching*. This approach encourages less teacher and more pupil talk. As a result our classrooms are noisier than ever before with the children accelerating their learning – and we love it!
- » Beyond the classroom, children are offered many responsibilities. For example, as well as a school council representative, each class has two 'ambassadors', whose job includes articulating what they are doing to any visitors. Furthermore, our Year 6 children's leadership team provide an aspirational role model for their peers, even creating policy.

“The tailored approach helps staff understand how beneficial it is for the children”

We're learning and having fun



I like using iPads – technology keeps my brain thinking





Our three head learners:
Mrs Silverton, Head Boy
and Head Girl

» THE HEAD BOY AND GIRL SAY

'As prefects we have many responsibilities, such as raising money for charities and leading a Year 5 and 6 assembly.

'In December we organised a fundraiser where children and teachers came dressed in a Christmas jumper or best clothes. This event raised £250 and everyone enjoyed it and had lots of fun.

'Being prefects gives us the privilege of organising assemblies. We give the students of Frederick Bird updates about the school and issues that have been raised. Also, our Headteacher gives us advice on what to tell other pupils, which is very helpful.'

Practise what we preach: adults leading their own learning

One of the things that sets our school apart is the unwavering commitment of our staff, who continue to embrace tenaciously new ways of working.

Having consulted them about the training that the school provides, a new plan was designed around their responses. We now offer a combination of workshops for staff alongside bespoke one-to-one support, all of which focuses on the needs that they have themselves identified. Both teachers and support staff have relished this tailored approach – and it helps them understand how beneficial it is for the children too.

In the 'Good Practice Exchange' teachers form triads, each identifying an area from the School Development Plan in which they can help each other improve. They design their own learning, requesting support such as a school visit or

an observation of another teacher. When they present their journey to colleagues at the end of this termly process, the clarity of their improvement is truly impressive.

Two years ago teachers were working too hard and too many passive children were failing to reach their full potential. Now we see learners who are happier, more engaged and better behaved – and our data has started to back up what we know is happening: both attainment and progress are improving. We are justifiably optimistic about the future.

In schools we can often walk a narrow path to get to a destination that is not of our choosing, focusing on what we have to measure at the expense of what we know is important. By allowing the children to help us steer our journey's course, we end up with outcomes that not only raise standards but build a child's capacity to continue to aspire and achieve.