

Beacon Academy

Woodthorpe Road, Loughborough, LE11 2NF

Inspection dates 10–11 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils are not making sufficient progress, particularly in reading and mathematics, to reach the standards they are capable of by the end of Year 6.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Consequently, the most able pupils in particular are not challenged effectively.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently good. Boys, in particular, frequently lose concentration when lesson activities fail to keep them interested.
- Teachers in Reception do not always closely check children's responses during sessions, so they adapt activities to sustain good progress.
- Senior leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are not consistently rigorous to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- Subject leaders responsible for reading and mathematics are not fully involved in checking the quality of teaching and driving improvement.
- Senior leaders' plans for improvement are not precise enough to help governors check that the actions taken are ensuring pupils are on track to reach their targets.
- In mathematics, pupils are not provided with detailed feedback on their work, or enough opportunities to apply their skills in a range of different subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils in the specially resourced unit for those with special educational needs achieve well.
- Pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school, particularly because of the wide range of after-hours clubs. As a result, attendance continues to improve.
- Pupils make good progress in writing. Teachers check their progress carefully and give detailed guidance on how to improve it.
- Governors and senior leaders have succeeded in involving parents and carers fully in the life of the school. As a result, they appreciate the levels of care, guidance and support provided.
- Pupils who receive additional support in reading in Key Stage 1 make rapid progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons taught by 19 teachers, six of which were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with: the headteacher and other school leaders; two groups of pupils from Key Stage 2; representatives of the governing body; a group of parents; and the regional director for Academies Enterprise Trust, the academy sponsor.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including: the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement; the school's data relating to the attainment and progress of pupils; reports to the governing body; and information relating to the attendance and safeguarding of pupils.
- Consideration was given to: 24 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View); the school's own survey of the views of parents and carers; and questionnaires completed by 38 members of staff.

Inspection team

David Carter, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alan Jones

Additional Inspector

Juliet Jaggs

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Beacon Academy opened on 1 December 2012.
- It is a larger-than-average-sized primary academy.
- A children's centre shares the school site. There are two Early Years Foundation Stage nursery classes which are managed by the academy. Beacon Academy Children's Centre is inspected separately.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is well above that found nationally. This is additional funding provided for looked after children and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action is well above average, as is the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The academy has a specially resourced provision for up to 40 pupils who have moderate learning difficulties, including those who have difficulties in hearing and who have a statement of special educational needs. There are currently 39 pupils on roll who are receiving support in the specialist unit.
- The academy runs its own breakfast club and homework clubs which are managed by the governing body.
- The academy has appointed six new teachers during its first year of opening.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' attitudes to learning so that these are consistently good or better by ensuring:
 - all teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve so that lessons meet the needs and interests of pupils of different abilities, and boys in particular
 - pupils are provided with stimulating activities to engage their interest and clear explanations of what they are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson
 - teachers use questions more effectively to challenge the thinking of the most able pupils
 - teachers in Reception provide more opportunities for children to make their own choices in learning, and adapt activities as necessary to reflect their needs.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in order to raise attainment, particularly in reading and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that older pupils who have gaps in their understanding of the links between letters and the sounds they make (phonics), place value and calculation, are provided with work which will quickly strengthen these key skills
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to apply their knowledge of place value and skills in calculation in solving real-life problems in the different subjects that they study
 - ensuring that pupils are given detailed feedback on a regular basis on how to improve their work in mathematics, and opportunities to show how they have improved in order to reach their targets.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - providing the leaders responsible for reading and mathematics with more opportunities to check on the quality of teaching in these subjects so they can take a greater role in driving

improvement

- ensuring that plans for improvement include frequent and specific measures of success, linked to pupils' progress and attainment, so that leaders and governors can check the extent to which teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement
 - ensuring that checks on the quality of teaching take into account a wider range of evidence so that staff are consistently provided with clear recommendations on how they can improve their practice.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because pupils are not narrowing the gaps between their low starting points and national averages quickly enough. For instance, from the time of the academy's opening until last summer, when Year 6 pupils undertook their statutory assessments, they made expected rates of progress. However, attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2013 in reading and mathematics was well below average, and in writing below average. More-able pupils are not consistently achieving the higher level results they are capable of.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enter the academy with skills and knowledge which are below what is typical. Although they make adequate progress during their time in the Reception year, they are not provided with enough opportunities to develop their skills quickly enough in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly when learning through activities they choose for themselves. As a result, when they enter Year 1, these skills remain below average.
- Older pupils in Key Stage 2 often have gaps in their understanding of letters and the sounds they make (phonics), which is impeding their rates of progress. Generally, however, pupils in Key Stage 2 are making good progress in writing. Pupils are provided with regular opportunities in which to develop their skills by drafting and producing final pieces of writing in a range of subjects. Pupils in Year 3 and 4 make expected rates of progress in reading.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics varies between year groups and classes from Year 1 to Year 6. Pupils are not always provided with work which is set at the right level. As a result, boys in particular frequently lose concentration and are not always motivated to learn. Pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to undertake mathematical work in a range of subjects. Consequently, pupils' skills in applying their mathematical understanding in order to solve real-life problems are underdeveloped. A minority of pupils in Key Stage 2 have gaps in their mathematical knowledge which are not addressed well enough to ensure that they make good progress.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 are making good rates of progress, particularly in reading and writing. This is because of the consistency of approach in the teaching of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) and how this is being used to develop their skills in writing. Pupils in Key Stage 1 who are falling behind in reading receive additional support. This is helping them to make rapid progress. Although standards in 2013 were below national averages, the gap in attainment has narrowed during their time in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium make similar rates of progress to their classmates. Results for the most recent Year 6 cohort show that the attainment of eligible pupils was the same as their peers in writing, but above in reading and mathematics by two terms. Pupils benefit from working in small groups due to appointment of additional teaching staff, as well as receiving specialist support in reading.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in the mainstream provision make similar rates of progress to their peers. Pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. This is due to the good teaching they receive, which precisely meets the learning needs of individual pupils. Pupils also make good progress in developing their communication skills, through speaking and listening activities, as well as their skills in signing.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement because not enough teaching is good enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress from their starting points. The quality of teaching is good in the specialist resource unit for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, but in the main school it varies in quality between Reception Year and Year 6.
- Teaching in Reception requires improvement. Adults are not always checking closely enough children's responses during sessions and adapting activities accordingly to make sure they are challenged to make good progress. Children are given too few opportunities to follow their own lines of enquiry or work without direct adult supervision.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers are not using information about pupils' prior achievement well enough to plan lessons that precisely meet the needs of those of different ability. The work provided for more-able pupils, in particular, is not always challenging enough. Teachers' explanations are not always clear and their questioning of the most-able pupils during lessons does not always challenge their thinking. As a result, few pupils reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers are consistently applying the academy's new approach to the teaching of writing alongside developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. This has enabled pupils to receive clear guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils enjoy responding to teachers' comments on their draft pieces of work and showing how they improved their writing when they present their final work for publication. Teachers are not however, providing pupils with same level of detailed feedback in mathematics. As a result, pupils are not always correcting their work nor do they know what they have to improve in order to reach their targets.
- Teaching in the specially resourced provision for special educational needs is consistently good. Teachers in the unit have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning and there is a sharp focus upon providing work which is specific to meeting the needs of pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress towards achieving their individual targets. Teaching assistants are well briefed and work closely with teachers to sustain pupils' concentration and commitment to their learning.
- In the best teaching, pupils' attitudes to learning are good because teachers capture their interest through stimulating presentations and clear explanations of what they are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. In Year 5 and 6 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils were highly engaged in demonstrating their understanding of symmetry of two-dimensional shapes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**requires improvement**

- Behaviour and safety requires improvement because pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently good. Pupils, particularly boys, frequently lose concentration during lessons when teachers' instructions and explanations are unclear or too slow. Pupils find it difficult to sustain their interest when the work they are undertaking is not challenging enough or too difficult.
- Pupils generally behave well around the academy, for instance during assemblies, at the start of lessons and when attending breakfast and homework club. Pupils in Key Stage 2 told inspectors that although most pupils were friendly and polite, a few pupils were disruptive, particularly at break-times. Staff, governors and parents acknowledge that a small minority of pupils have demonstrated challenging behaviour during the first six months since the academy opened. However, pupils confirmed that the new behaviour code is helping to improve behaviour in the

academy because pupils are more aware of their consequences of their actions and are more motivated to behave well in order to achieve rewards.

- Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying. Pupils say that bullying is rare; however, a few pupils still use inappropriate language including name-calling. Pupils say that adults do respond quickly if bullying occurs and the number of incidents has decreased during the autumn term.
- Pupils say that they feel safe because they are cared for well by all adults in the academy. Pupils are taught about how to assess risk and keep safe in a range of situations. In particular, pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet.
- Staff know their pupils well and use effective strategies to support pupils who have social and emotional difficulties and who demonstrate challenging behaviour. This has led to a reduction in the number of pupils being excluded. Consequently, exclusions are now rare.
- Pupils enjoy coming to the academy, and in particular attending the wide range of after-hours clubs. As a result, attendance has improved during the first year of the academy opening and is now average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership requires improvement because senior leaders have not yet secured consistency in the quality of teaching. Senior leaders place too much emphasis on what they see during lesson observations when evaluating the quality of teaching and not enough on whether pupils make sufficient progress over time. Consequently, these evaluations are sometimes overgenerous and teachers are not consistently provided with precise recommendations on how they can improve their practice.
- Senior leaders are aware of the academy's strengths and areas for development, which are identified in their plans for improvement. The plans make it clear the order of steps which are to be taken to drive improvement; however, the plans do not contain milestones and success criteria relating to pupils' achievement. This makes it difficult for leaders to check the extent to which their actions are proving successful.
- The skills of the leaders of responsible for reading and mathematics have been strengthened through recent training; however, these leaders are not yet having enough influence on teaching in order to secure rapid rates of progress in all classes. For instance, the leader of mathematics acknowledges that there are inconsistencies in the application of the mathematics policy but this weakness remains unresolved.
- Although senior leaders have organised teaching around topics and themes, pupils are not given enough opportunities to apply their skills in mathematics when learning in other subjects.
- The leader responsible for writing is providing teachers with regular feedback on the quality of teaching of writing. This is helping to ensure that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of writing and this is having a positive impact upon pupils' improved rates of progress. The leader of the specially resourced provision for special educational needs leads and manages the unit well.
- Parents and carers speak positively about how the headteacher has ensured that they are fully involved in the life of the academy. Parents receive up-to-date information about what is happening through the academy's website and via text messages. Parents regularly visit the

academy to attend celebration assemblies as well as support in the making of resources to help pupils in their learning. In discussion with inspectors, parents expressed their appreciation of the high levels of care, guidance and support which is provided to families and pupils. Parents are involved in their child's learning at home through the use of reading and homework diaries.

- Pupils say that they enjoy writing about a range of subjects, particularly history, geography and science. The curriculum is enriched through the use of visits and visitors. Pupils have benefited from working with the 'Artist in Residence', undertaking enterprise projects, and having links with pupils in Africa. These activities make a positive contribution towards pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils have many opportunities in which to develop their skills in sport and physical education. Leaders have used the new primary school sport funding to appoint a specialist teacher to coach pupils during their physical education lessons as well as in the wide range of extra-curricular sport clubs. This has raised the participation rates of pupils in playing sport. Pupils also benefit from swimming on a regular basis using the academy's own facilities. Pupils are involved in competitive sport via range of inter-school sports events, being particularly successful in football. These activities are making a positive contribution to pupils' health and well-being.
- The headteacher is passionate about the academy and is highly committed to bringing about improvement. Under her leadership, she is working closer with senior leaders and has secured improvements to the quality of teaching of writing, pupils' attendance, and the engagement of parents and carers in their child's education. Senior leaders have demonstrated that the academy has the capacity to improve further.
- The academy sponsor (Academy Enterprise Trust) has provided effective support by arranging training for staff. This has helped to improve teachers' skills in the teaching of writing. Governors have improved their understanding of how to compare the academy's performance with that of similar schools and academies nationally following training delivered by a consultant from the academy sponsor.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is improving rapidly and governors are fully committed to securing the necessary changes so that pupils achieve well. The recently appointed Chair of the Governing Body has ensured that governor committees have clear terms of reference so that all aspects of the academy's work can be checked. Consequently, leaders are being held to closer account for the rate at which improvements are being implemented. Governors are limited in their ability, however, to check the extent to which improvements are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. This is because of the lack of milestones in their plans for improvement.
 - Governors are highly visible in the life of the academy and are well known by parents and carers. Consequently, they are able to quickly respond to the views of families and ensure that levels of engagement with parents and carers remain high.
 - Governors have made sure that additional funds are used appropriately. The pupil premium funding is ensuring that eligible pupils make similar rates of progress to their peers. This is indicative of the academy's approach to ensuring equality of opportunity. The new primary sports funding is being used effectively and is raising the number of pupils involved in sport and physical education.
 - Governors have ensured that systems for reviewing the performance of teachers are robust. Governors work closely with the headteacher to ensure that decisions about pay are closely linked to teachers' performance.
 - Governors conduct regular health and safety checks and make sure that their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding and child protection are met.

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	139005
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	433613

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	311
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deanne Dilling
Headteacher	Clare Spence
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01509 212227
Fax number	01509 213299
Email address	contactus@thebeaconacademy.org

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