

Beacon Academy

Woodthorpe Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 2NF

Inspection dates

18–19 November 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leadership has not been effective in ensuring that the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils are good.
- Not all leaders have effective methods for checking the school’s progress towards key priorities.
- Leaders have not fully established ways to help parents to understand the work of the school and their children’s learning.
- Staff and pupils do not always fully understand or follow the school’s behaviour systems.
- There are inconsistencies in the way teachers mark pupils’ work and how well they motivate learning.
- Teachers do not always provide the right level of work for the range of ability in the class.
- Teaching assistants are not always sufficiently involved in pupils’ learning during lessons.
- Not all pupils, including the disadvantaged and the most able, make the good progress they should.
- In writing, pupils do not always build quickly enough upon what they already know.
- In reading, pupils do not have enough opportunity to strengthen their comprehension.
- In mathematics, the use of the correct vocabulary and opportunities for problem solving are variable.
- Provision in the early years is not fully effective. Teachers’ expectations have not always been high enough to ensure that children make good progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers know what needs to be done to move the school forward. As a result, teaching and outcomes for pupils are improving.
- Leaders have established effective systems to check the progress pupils make.
- Pupils say they feel safe and the school’s work to keep them safe is effective.
- The social and emotional development of pupils in the specialist provision is good.
- Good use is made of outside expertise to improve teaching.
- The whole-school approach to handwriting is leading to well-presented work in pupils’ books.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by making sure that teachers consistently:
 - motivate learners and match work well to the range of ability in the class
 - apply the school's marking policy
 - use adults effectively to support pupils' learning
 - have high expectations of what children in the early years should achieve.

- Improve outcomes by making sure that pupils in all classes:
 - develop mathematical vocabulary more widely and deepen their understanding by using their skills more frequently to solve problems
 - build upon what they already know and can do in order to speed up progress in writing
 - strengthen their comprehension and understanding of what they read.

- Improve leadership and management by making sure that:
 - all leaders have effective methods for judging the impact of their improvement plans
 - staff and pupils fully understand and apply the school's behaviour management systems so that good behaviour is more consistently promoted
 - parents are helped more effectively to understand the work of the school and have more opportunities to be involved in their children's learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Some plans drawn up by leaders to improve the school have had insufficient time to take full effect due to changes of leadership and staff since the previous inspection. Although subject leaders identify areas for improvement, they do not always have effective methods to judge what progress the school is making towards key priorities.
 - The foundations for a consistent approach to managing behaviour are laid but are not yet sufficiently established to permeate the work of the school and have a positive effect on pupils' personal development.
 - Links with parents are developing and leading to improved attendance. However, ways in which parents can be involved in their children's learning, and their understanding of the work of the school, are limited.
 - The headteacher and senior leaders, ably supported by governors and academy trust managers, have raised expectations of staff and pupil performance. They create a culture for learning and keep a close eye on how well pupils are doing. They set ambitious targets and involve staff in understanding the aims of the school.
 - Leaders provide staff with the training they need in order to improve, for example, in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters represent). They give staff the opportunity to share expertise with others and to benefit from working alongside specialists, including those provided by the academy trust. As a result, teaching, including in the early years, is improving although there is still some way to go to ensure consistency.
 - Leaders carry out regular reviews of the effectiveness of the pupil premium funding. It is used appropriately to support eligible pupils in their academic and personal achievements and there are some examples of good progress. However, leaders recognise that more work is needed to help all of these pupils to make the good progress they should.
 - Leaders have high expectations of what pupils should achieve in all classes. They demonstrate their commitment to ensuring equal opportunity for all, although these expectations are not yet ensuring that all pupils, including the most able, make good progress.
 - The curriculum is well balanced and supported by a range of after-school activities, trips and visitors. These have a positive effect on pupils' personal and academic development. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is suitably promoted through opportunities for pupils to work together and learn about others. The curriculum addresses key values such as respect and tolerance through assemblies and lessons, preparing pupils suitably for life in modern Britain.
 - The primary sports funding is used effectively to purchase equipment and to extend the curriculum and staff expertise. As a result, an increasing proportion of pupils take part in physical activities and a wider range of sports is on offer.
- **The governance of the school**
- Governance is effective. Governors and members of the management board have successfully seen the school through a period of change. They identify strengths and staff expertise. They ask challenging questions about the school's performance and tackle weaknesses. They make regular visits to check the school's work and know what it needs to do to improve.
 - Governors carry out the performance management of the headteacher and know how teachers are helped to improve their work. They make decisions about teachers' pay and are well informed about the link between good teaching and pupils' good achievement. They are closely involved in making staff appointments and fully understand the principles of the safe recruitment of staff and keeping pupils safe.
 - Governors make good use of expertise within their ranks to provide effective support to the academy.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are clear about their responsibilities and undergo regular training to ensure that procedures are understood. Systems are well developed and consistently applied. Leaders know what actions to take should any concerns arise and work with parents to make sure that pupils are well supported. Vetting procedures on adults who work with children are thorough.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Although the leadership is monitoring teaching more closely and training is becoming more effective, there are still inconsistencies in the overall quality of teaching.
- Not all teachers pitch work well enough to the range of ability in the class. This means that for some pupils the work is too easy and for some, it is too hard. It is not always sufficiently challenging for the most-able pupils. This affects the amount of progress pupils make, how well they behave and how well they are motivated to learn.
- There is variation in the way that teachers apply the school's marking policy. Sometimes, it is better in English than in mathematics and some pupils receive more guidance than others on how to improve. As a result, these pupils are clearer than others about the next steps in their learning.
- Teaching assistants are not always fully involved in moving pupils' learning forward by giving sufficient guidance to help them to understand their work. As a result, not all pupils make as much progress as they could.
- Teachers do not insist that pupils use the correct mathematical vocabulary or apply their skills in problem-solving tasks. The teaching of writing does not always pay enough attention to building upon what pupils already know and can do. In reading, there is variation in how well teachers provide opportunities for pupils to show that they understand the text.
- Teaching is improving. A more consistent approach to the teaching of phonics is improving outcomes for pupils. The new whole-school approach to handwriting is consistently applied and pupils persevere with presenting their work well. In mathematics, teachers are plugging any gaps in pupils' knowledge and speeding up the progress they make in calculations.
- Teachers, including in the early years, link subjects together well in interesting topics. They make links to real life so that pupils see the point of their learning. For example, pupils in Year 6 were set the task of writing in the past tense in preparation for a diary they were going to keep while away on a residential visit.
- Teachers make sure that pupils know what they should achieve by the end of lessons. This quickens the pace of learning as pupils try hard to complete their work. Teachers modify their teaching during lessons to make sure that pupils understand and that any misconceptions are addressed. They ask relevant questions and expect pupils to explain their answers. Teachers often encourage pupils to assess for themselves how well they are doing.
- Staff develop positive relationships with pupils and often use humour well to give pupils the confidence to try things out. Staff, including teaching assistants, are well informed about the targets that those with special educational needs are working towards. Those pupils from the specialist provision who attend the mainstream classes are fully involved and included.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement because there is some way to go to ensure that all pupils are confident and successful learners. There is some variation between classes in how well pupils respond to their learning because it is not always interesting enough or well matched to their ability.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes. They like finding out about new topics and sharing their ideas and resources with each other. When they are getting on with work which they really enjoy, pupils are fully motivated and there is no time wasting. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that teachers 'make learning fun' and 'make us laugh', indicating their enjoyment of their learning.
- Pupils take on responsibility willingly. For example, during the inspection, they talked keenly about the newly formed school council and their involvement in the staff interview process. Year 6 pupils are expected to 'lead by example'. These experiences, together with learning about fairness and democracy, prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. Their learning in lessons and during assemblies helps them to understand how to keep themselves safe. They know about the different forms of bullying and what to do if they have any concerns. Pupils say that bullying does happen very occasionally but they are confident that it is dealt with. The school's records show that incidents are recorded and followed up by staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement because there are inconsistencies in the way that behaviour is managed and in how well pupils respond to staff. This affects the amount of progress some pupils make in lessons and the smooth daily running of the school.
- Pupils and staff understand the school's rules but they are not yet sufficiently established to be followed automatically. Most pupils behave well in lessons but a minority say that, sometimes, lessons are noisy and this affects their learning. Not all pupils naturally show the respect and tolerance that they learn about in lessons and assemblies without prompting from adults.
- Attendance is improving. Pupils say they like coming to school and the number who stay away frequently is reducing due to the school's efforts. The school's breakfast club offers a positive start to the school day and pupils say they enjoy the activities that are provided.
- Pupils who attend the specialist provision receive the support they need in order to conform to the school's expectations. They are well prepared for sharing experiences with other pupils in the school, for example, during assemblies.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because not all pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There is variation between classes in how well pupils achieve in these subjects.
- In 2015, the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 results showed a rise in attainment, although it remained well below that expected for pupils' ages. Attainment was well-below average because in both key stages pupils experienced periods of underachievement in the past. Teachers' expectations had not always been high enough to ensure that all pupils made the progress expected for their age. Improvements in the quality of teaching mean that gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are now being addressed and attainment is rising.
- In 2015, although there was an improvement in the progress pupils made in reading and mathematics from 2014, not enough pupils made the expected progress by the end of Year 6. This was the result of teachers' expectations not being sufficiently high as these pupils moved through Key Stage 2.
- The effect of stronger leadership and improved teaching is evident in the work in pupils' books. Progress is accelerating and more pupils than previously are making good progress. As a result, they are being better prepared for their move to secondary education.
- By the end of Year 2, the most recent attainment information shows an increase in the number of the most-able pupils who reached the higher levels, although proportions were below average. By the end of Year 6, a well-below-average proportion reached the higher levels because they did not make enough progress over time. The most-able pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to do better than similar pupils last year. When the most-able pupils are suitably challenged, they make good progress. However, greater consistency in the level of challenge for these pupils is needed so that they reach their full potential.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make variable rates of progress because there are some inconsistencies in the effectiveness of the support they receive. Those who attend the specialist provision make good gains in their social and emotional development because teaching and resources are well matched to their specific personal needs. These pupils are helped to gain confidence by being fully involved in the life of the school and some attend lessons in mainstream classes.
- By the end of Year 6, in 2015, disadvantaged pupils did better in mathematics than in 2014 and slightly better in reading and writing. However, they remained behind their peers. In reading, they were more than three terms behind, in writing one term behind and, in mathematics, half a term behind. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment was significantly behind other pupils nationally because their progress was well below other pupils nationally: in reading, six terms behind; in writing, seven terms behind; in mathematics, five terms behind. The school's current information shows that gaps are closing but the achievement of this group of pupils remains a key priority as their rates of progress throughout the school are not yet consistently good.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Early years provision requires improvement because the good start children make in the Nursery has not always been sufficiently built upon to ensure that they continue to make good progress by the time they leave the early years. Leaders are addressing this with some urgency and children's progress is accelerating.
- The progress children make in number and writing has not been good enough in recent years to prepare them well for their learning in Year 1. The school's information shows that those children currently in the Reception classes are making quicker progress than previously in these areas of learning. Additional funding is used increasingly effectively and gaps in performance between groups of children, including the disadvantaged, are closing.
- In the Nursery, good teaching means that routines are well established and the expectations of staff are high. Tasks are interesting and carefully planned to motivate the learning of all children, including those who have special educational needs and the most able. This good practice is now being adopted in the Reception classes where teaching is improving strongly and outcomes for all groups of children are on the rise.
- The Nursery provides well for the two-year-olds who attend. Children are very well supported by the stimulating environment and nurturing approach of the staff. As a result, children begin to develop independence and learn to cooperate as they mix with others.
- Leaders are now ensuring a consistent approach to checking progress across the early years. Staff make accurate assessments about children's starting points and use effective systems to check how well children are doing. They share the information they gather with parents. Staff pay close attention to children's welfare and children learn how to behave safely.

School details

Unique reference number	139005
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10001836

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	422
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Taylor
Headteacher	Mark Roberts
Telephone number	01509 212227
Website	www.thebeaconacademy.org
Email address	contactus@thebeaconacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	10–11 December 2013

Information about this school

- Beacon Academy is larger than the average-sized primary academy.
- Most pupils are of White British background.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above average. The funding is received for pupils who are, or have been, eligible for free school meals, or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well above average.
- The academy has a specially resourced provision for up to 40 pupils who have moderate learning difficulties. Currently, 40 pupils attend.
- The early years provision comprises a Nursery which children attend for morning or afternoon sessions and two Reception classes which children attend full time.
- In 2014, the school failed to meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment, and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The academy runs its own breakfast and after-school clubs.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant staff and leadership changes. The headteacher joined the school in May 2015.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 24 lessons and one assembly. Four observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. In all, 19 members of staff were seen teaching.
- The inspectors observed playtimes, lunchtimes and the breakfast club.
- The inspectors looked at samples of work from all classes, spoke to pupils about their work during lessons and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and management board, leaders and staff. An inspector also met the regional director for Academies Enterprise Trust – the academy sponsor.
- The inspectors analysed 12 responses from parents to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View. They took account of responses from parents to a questionnaire recently conducted by the school. An inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors analysed 43 responses to the questionnaire completed by school staff.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work. They looked at progress and attendance information, improvement planning, records of the monitoring of teaching and documentation relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

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Sarah Fielding	Ofsted Inspector

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