

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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20 September 2016

Mrs Louise Bussell  
Headteacher  
Beacon Academy  
Woodthorpe Road  
Loughborough  
Leicestershire  
LE11 2NF

Dear Mrs Bussell

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Beacon Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 12 September 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in November 2015, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders, governors and the school's sponsor, the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- monitor different groups of pupils closely, including disadvantaged pupils, the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to ensure that they make at least the same progress from their starting points as other pupils nationally
- continue to develop pupils' reading and writing and their skills across the curriculum

- improve pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absence, particularly of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, subject leaders and two members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I spoke on the telephone to the former regional director of education for the Academies Enterprise Trust, who supported the school until the end of August 2016. The school self-evaluation, latest achievement information and behaviour policy were evaluated. I reviewed the school's single central record. I made short visits to lessons in English and mathematics across all year groups. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, you were appointed as headteacher in January 2016. The previous executive headteacher supported you in your first two terms and has now taken up the role of chair of the governing body in September 2016. Two assistant headteachers have been appointed, one with responsibility for teaching and learning and the other with responsibility for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Two teachers have left the school and five new teachers started in September 2016. Numbers on roll at the school are rising steadily and numbers of pupils who have English as an additional language are increasing.

## **Main findings**

You, your senior leaders and governors have taken appropriate steps to act on the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. You have a clear, coherent vision for the improvement of this school. This vision is known and understood by all. You have ensured that staff have been involved in planning and contributing to new, whole-school policies and as a result staff morale has improved. You have kept the interests of pupils at the heart of everything you do.

The decisions you have taken are now beginning to bear fruit. You have ensured that all staff are focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning and you have provided a range of training opportunities for all staff. Teachers have appreciated being able to share knowledge, discuss good practice and support each other. You have developed a culture of trust and collaboration. You have appointed a new member of staff to lead on teaching and learning across the school. He is also a specialist leader of education for mathematics. He has provided all teachers with clear, consistent guidance on senior leaders' high expectations for teaching,

learning and assessment. Teachers have had training on the school's new assessment system. As a result, teachers are more confident in assessing pupils' current attainment and planning for their progress. Leaders hold regular pupil progress reviews with teachers so that additional support can be given to any pupil who is falling behind.

The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is significantly above the national average as is that for pupils who are disadvantaged. The school also has a specialist provision for 40 pupils. Historically, as a result of weaker teaching and low expectations, pupils have underachieved and many are still having to catch up to age expectations. Although pupils' progress for all groups is now improving, when looked at as a whole-school cohort, attainment continues to be low and below national expectations. This is an area which you acknowledge you still need to work on. You and other leaders are determined that aspirations remain high and that all pupils' progress continues to improve and meet at least national expectations from starting points.

You have successfully introduced a consistent marking policy. This was evident in all books seen during our tour of classrooms. Books were well-presented and pupils clearly take pride in their work. You are determined to continue to focus on these high standards and ensure that feedback given in books is fully understood by pupils so that they can use it to consolidate their learning.

You have provided more opportunities for support staff to meet with teachers and to plan together. Support staff have been included in the school's writing training. In all lessons seen during the visit, teaching assistants were supporting pupils' learning well, particularly those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants used questioning effectively to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.

You have created a bright and stimulating environment for children in the early years to learn in, including sensory rooms for those children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders provide well for children's different learning needs and interests and there is a relatively high ratio of staff to children. Staff seen during our tour of classrooms had high expectations of what children can achieve. You introduced a new system for teaching phonics (letters and the sounds they make) in January 2016 and the amount of children who passed the phonics test in 2016 rose to 77% compared to only 39% the year before. You are now monitoring children more closely from an earlier start to ensure that they make good progress throughout their time at the school.

Senior leaders have reviewed the mathematics curriculum and ensured that pupils regularly develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills as well as use mathematical vocabulary, which is now displayed in every classroom. This was evident in lessons seen during the learning walk and in pupils' books. Pupils are starting to be able to explain mathematical reasoning using appropriate vocabulary.

The subject leader for mathematics, alongside the specialist leader of education, has ensured that learning in mathematics is better matched to pupils of all abilities. This helps pupils to deepen their knowledge of mathematics at the stage appropriate for their understanding. In 2016, the progress made in mathematics by pupils in key stage two improved significantly. The mathematics leader now has responsibility for English and mathematics and is introducing a similar approach to English this year.

Leaders have provided lots of training for staff on writing. Staff support pupils to imitate language they need orally before reading and understanding it and then writing their own versions. As a result, pupils' confidence in writing has grown and it has helped them to develop their vocabulary. The impact of this approach is yet to be seen in pupils' writing outcomes which are still too low, lower than in mathematics and reading. You are fully aware of this and continue to prioritise developing pupils' writing skills across the school.

You have invested in new books for the library and class readers for every class to encourage pupils' enjoyment of reading. You have reviewed the system where books are chosen for pupils so that books are more appropriate for their stage of reading progress. You also ran workshops to support parents helping their children to read at home. Leaders have ensured that pupils have more opportunities in lessons to complete comprehension tasks to check on pupils' understanding. While pupils' progress in reading is improving, you acknowledge that more needs to be done to develop pupils' reading skills across the curriculum so that they can better access learning and make more rapid progress.

You, your senior leaders and governors have ensured that all improvement plans now include effective methods for judging the impact of the school's actions. You have clear systems in place for regularly reviewing and monitoring the school's improvement work and these are shared with all staff. You are not afraid to refine and change things when they are not working.

Governors provide the necessary support and challenge; they are knowledgeable and are effective in holding leaders to account. They have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are committed to ensuring the highest possible outcomes for all pupils at the school. They have full confidence in you and your leadership team to move the school to good at its next inspection.

You have taken swift action to improve pupils' behaviour in lessons since the last inspection by introducing a new behaviour policy and making sure that it is consistently applied. Staff have all had training on this new system and they are clear about your high expectations. The new code of conduct is displayed and used in all classes. Pupils are now aware of the consequences of poor behaviour choices and school behaviour logs show that behaviour has improved and pupils are much calmer in lessons. You have introduced a reward system where all adults in the school, including midday supervisors, reward pupils for good conduct in lessons,

around the school and on the playground. Pupils are eager to earn good behaviour points and behaviour around the school and during break and lunchtimes has improved as a result. However, fixed-term exclusions were high last year. You have worked with a local outstanding school and introduced remedial systems to support pupils with behaviour needs; your internal behaviour logs show that these high exclusion figures will not be repeated this year.

Attendance was below the national average in 2014/15 and although it has improved in 2015/16 it remains below the national average. Persistent absence is above the national average. This is partly because there are significant numbers of pupils who are absent from school because of medical needs. However, you know that attendance is too low. You are going to look at ways to use specialist funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to improve their attendance and to engage their parents' support in this.

You have ensured that parents are included in all the work that the school is doing and you have provided lots of opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's learning. You have introduced a programme of events for parents throughout the year, including half termly parental consultation groups, surveys, assemblies and workshops as well as informal drop ins. Since the last inspection, two parents have now joined the governing body. There is a parent forum run by parents and a weekly bulletin to inform parents of key dates and events. You and other senior leaders are regularly on the playground in the mornings to talk to parents and you have also put up a notice board for parents on the playground and an information screen. You have trialled an online platform for parents of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, where teachers share positive behaviour and learning with parents. This is due to be rolled out to all parents this year.

Your single central record meets statutory requirements.

### **External support**

The school has brokered effective support from its sponsors, the Academies Enterprise Trust, and works in partnership with good and outstanding schools across the trust to support teachers in their professional development. You have also worked closely with local schools to complete external moderation to validate the school's Year 6 assessments. This has helped staff to become more confident with the new assessment measures introduced this year and for you to have an accurate understanding of current pupils' attainment. Staff have also worked with schools within the trust to share good practice. For example, the new leader for science visited good schools and reviewed best practice before revising the school's new science curriculum which was launched this September. You have valued greatly working with Ashmount School, an outstanding teaching and specialist school, to develop effective strategies to support pupils' positive behaviour for learning.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leicestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sally Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**