

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Dawn Parkinson
Headteacher
Beaumont Leys School
Anstey Lane
Leicester
Leicestershire
LE4 0FL

Dear Mrs Parkinson

Short inspection of Beaumont Leys School

Following my visit to the school on 13 September 2016 with Frances Le Pla, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are determined that the potential of every pupil should be realised, no matter what the barriers may be to their success. You are committed to ensuring that the school is a great place to learn for your pupils and you are clear with your staff that no learning experience should ever be less than good.

Pupils appreciate the culture of high aspiration that pervades the school, and they thrive within the orderly, business-like and purposeful learning environment. The values of success, 'best self' and 'positive future self' are well understood and believed by pupils and staff. You said that you never underestimate the importance of the school to the community that it serves and you feel that the main priority is to ensure that each pupil leaves school well prepared to be an effective member of society.

You have provided diligent and determined leadership since your appointment as co-headteacher in 2014 and then sole headteacher in 2015. It is clear that you and your leaders faced challenges in order to ensure that the school maintained a good quality of education. A significant one was improving pupils' achievement as, although this improved in 2013 and 2014, it was not good enough in 2015. Some groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, underachieved.

To deal with this and other issues, you have not shied away from making difficult decisions and you have tackled promptly any hint of complacent leadership and weaknesses in the quality of teaching. You have found creative ways in which to recruit new staff to the school, to develop their talents and to retain their skills. You have ensured that there is staffing capacity to continue to raise standards at Beaumont Leys School.

The chair of the governing body has, rightly, challenged you to ensure that improvement takes place and that individual pupils and groups of pupils make the progress that they should, according to their starting points. The most recent information indicates that, in 2016, greater proportions of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have made appropriate progress in both English and mathematics and are achieving closer to other pupils nationally than they did in 2015. Importantly, a greater proportion of most-able disadvantaged pupils have achieved A* and A grades at GCSE. Information about pupils within the current Year 10, Year 11 and the pupils studying at key stage 3 indicates an improvement in achievement across many curriculum areas and diminishing differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally, including the most able disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils' achievement and teacher recruitment in mathematics were identified as areas for development at the previous inspection. You have been extremely creative to ensure that there is a full complement of mathematics specialists within this department. Talented new mathematics leaders are encouraged to stay at the school because they receive high-quality professional development opportunities. This has not been an easy task, as the recruitment and retention of high-quality mathematics specialists are a challenge within your local area. More pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are attaining well in mathematics. The progress of lower ability disadvantaged pupils within mathematics, rightly, remains an area of focus for the school, as, though improving, it is still not good enough.

In the past, attendance has been low. More pupils are attending school regularly. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen dramatically. You use the pupil premium funding resourcefully to help the most challenging pupils attend. The family support worker is well known within the community and provides invaluable assistance for many families, in order that pupils can be in school and learning. The governing body has insisted that a further reduction in those pupils absent from school is a specific performance target for you. You have ensured that necessary work to improve attendance, particularly of disadvantaged pupils, will continue. Some aspects of the weekly monitoring of how well groups of pupils attend school need to be more systematic than they are currently.

The careers advice and guidance offered to pupils within the school are impressive. You feel that your school's concept of the 'positive future self' is a core value and that pupils 'don't always understand that they are writing their life story' with the decisions that they make in school. You recognise that a barrier for many of your pupils is the ability to look outside the community and to understand the many possibilities that exist.

To support pupils in making well-informed choices, you have ensured a curriculum that includes subject-specific careers advice in each year group. Every pupil is involved in a two-week work placement. Each pupil receives an individual interview to support them as they continue their education beyond Beaumont Leys School. You employ a 'futures adviser' to work with your more challenging pupils so they can develop the skills they need for future learning and widen their experiences. Leicestershire Cares, a local charity, provides pupils with the opportunity to refine their employability skills.

Pupils told inspectors that they appreciated very much the efforts their teachers made in order to help them take their next steps. For example, one pupil was eager to inform inspectors that 'I want to be the first person in my family to go to university.' The number of pupils not in education, employment or training once they leave the school is extremely low and much positive work is undertaken to ensure that pupils move from school towards a productive future.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a potent ethos of safeguarding within the school. Pupils told inspectors that they felt highly valued by their teachers and that, in turn, they value highly their school.

The senior leader with oversight of inclusion and safeguarding is one of five designated safeguarding leads. She is supported well by a strong and committed team. Heads of year, in particular, are an important point of contact for pupils and all know individual pupils well. These leaders are highly experienced and knowledgeable. In addition, they have extensive knowledge of the community and a highly developed understanding of the specific needs of potentially vulnerable pupils and the most appropriate provision to meet their needs. The senior leader for inclusion is tenacious in ensuring that the children looked after by the local authority attend school and make the progress that they should according to their starting points. As a result, these pupils attend and achieve well.

School leaders have made sure that a comprehensive policy is in place to safeguard pupils and that staff act upon it. The training provided is appropriate and staff are well informed about the school's processes. For example, there is a clear and well-understood policy for reporting any safeguarding concerns for individual pupils. As a result, issues are managed promptly. The school's records are stored appropriately and monitored conscientiously by senior leaders. The processes to recruit staff are sound.

Leaders pay careful attention to ensure that pupils are aware of the risks that they may face. 'Learning for life' lessons are part of the school curriculum and pupils learn about topics such as keeping safe when using the computer, self-harm, managing stress, drug misuse, radicalisation and the dangers of child sexual exploitation. Assemblies provide additional opportunities for external speakers, such as the community police, to provide further information and training.

Pupils said that bullying is rare. The Year 10 pupils who spoke with inspectors were vociferous when they said that prejudice 'would never be tolerated' and that homophobic or racist bullying would never be acceptable. They said that 'everyone is made to feel welcome at our school'.

Pupils also told inspectors that leaders had made sure that behaviour was good and that the school behaviour system works well. They were keen to discuss the aspects of the system that assisted pupils in improving their own behaviour, particularly in lessons. They deemed the 'thinking card' a particularly good idea. They said that it was extremely rare for their learning to be affected by the poor behaviour of others and that they felt safe when learning and in their social times.

Many pupils who have complex needs attend the school. The school's work with external agencies is making a difference, as is the in-school pastoral team. By working in partnership with local schools, your school has also added additional capacity, in order that pupils' needs are met. The behaviour partnership has been particularly successful in reducing the number of pupils, across the partnership, excluded from school.

There is no doubting the expertise of leaders and staff, their passion, and the impact that is evident for pupils. This is clear from the positive feedback received from parents and the individual examples they cited of how leaders and teachers had helped their children. Challenges remain. The attendance of some pupils is not good enough and it is not monitored well enough.

Inspection findings

- Leaders know the school well and have the capability to continue to develop it further. They are constantly refining their skills in monitoring pupils' progress and in analysing the difference their work is making to pupils' learning and attendance.
- The governing body has improved its effectiveness and provides good support and challenge to leaders. The chair of the governing body is particularly expert within the role.
- The governing body has undertaken much work to refine its procedures and to improve its efficiency. Local authority support to the governing body has been good and resulted in governors being well informed and reflective about the best ways to support the school.
- The pupil premium funding is managed well. Leaders evaluate spending to ensure that it deals appropriately with the barriers faced by the pupils entitled to the funds. Leaders have, rightly, refined the scope of this spending and directed funds to the areas of most need, such as improving the attendance of the most challenging disadvantaged pupils and removing the underperformance of lower ability disadvantaged pupils in mathematics.

- Senior leaders have been creative and have attracted mathematics leaders and teachers to the school. Subject specialists now teach mathematics. More pupils make the progress that they should from their starting points, including disadvantaged pupils. Pupils are achieving the higher grades because they now receive specialist support from their teachers.
- The progress made by lower ability pupils is still not good enough. Leaders have a range of pupil-premium-funded help and support in place for this group of mainly disadvantaged pupils. The early signs are that this support is working well.
- The science department has undergone a transformation. There is a new head of department and new members of the teaching staff. Inspectors observed pupils making good progress and enjoying the challenge from their teacher. Pupils are now making much better progress within this curriculum area than they did in the past.
- Children looked after by the local authority are supported extremely well. Their personal education plans focus on the correct things. Funding is allocated appropriately. The assistant headteacher for inclusion is a strong advocate for these pupils, knows them well and reviews their progress and attendance diligently. These pupils attend school more frequently than other pupils within the school. Many are making appropriate progress given their starting points.
- Inspectors heard a small group of pupils reading. These pupils read with enthusiasm and said that they enjoyed their reading in school. Many were able to read with expression. Others had learned effective phonics strategies, in order to decode difficult words. Pupils said that they had opportunities to read within school, but for some of these pupils, it was difficult for them to read at home. The school does not monitor the pupils' reading development sufficiently.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is good. All of the staff have open to them a vast array of training and professional development opportunities, including a weekly training session.
- Leaders know the teachers well and have developed an 'open-door' approach to lesson observation and lesson study. You told me that, 'pupils are the important audience, not leaders with clipboards'.
- Pupils' progress is improving across many of the curriculum areas. This is particularly evident in key stage 3.
- You have established a culture of high expectations within the school. Leaders have used the school environment thoughtfully to promote visually pupils 'being their best selves'. These images are extremely powerful.
- A greater proportion of most-able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are attaining A* and A grades at GCSE.
- You are aware that too few pupils achieve the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) standard. This is because you have struggled to recruit modern foreign languages teachers. You now have an EBacc strategy for the current Year 9 pupils to deal with this.
- The school undertakes a great deal of preventative work to ensure that pupils stay safe. One example is the 'mindfulness sessions' that some pupils attend, in order for them to manage their stress and anger better.

- Leaders have taken a creative approach to help pupils improve their behaviour and avoid exclusion. The rates of pupil exclusion are reducing. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they improve:

- the systems for ensuring that disadvantaged pupils attend as well as others within the school
- the progress of disadvantaged pupils, particularly the lower ability pupils within mathematics
- the monitoring and support of pupils' reading, particularly the reading that takes place at home.

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

Yours sincerely

Jayne Ashman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the senior leadership team, the chair of the governing body, a governor, the assistant headteacher with responsibility for inclusion and a designated safeguarding lead. I also met with a local authority representative. The team inspector met the lead for pupils entitled to support through pupil premium funding and also the pupil premium champion. Inspectors visited a range of lessons across the school, particularly within mathematics and science. Some observations of teaching were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. We also observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at break- and lunchtimes, and during lessons. Inspectors spoke with a group of Year 10 pupils and heard a group of Year 8 pupils read. Inspectors considered the views of 54 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 29 free-text responses. In addition, we considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, pupil performance information, safeguarding records and policies. The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.