

Beacon Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131544
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	360289
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2011
Reporting inspector	John Farrow

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	130
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	41
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sheila Clapperton
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Jones
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Rising Sun Cottages Wallsend Tyne and Wear NE28 9JW
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Nineteen lessons were observed and 14 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and nursing support staff. Telephone interviews were undertaken with two parents and representatives of external partners. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation, including that relating to safeguarding of pupils, teachers' planning and pupils' progress. Fifty-six parents' and carers' questionnaires were also scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress of different groups of pupils and students (especially those at the very earliest stages of learning and development).
- How well teaching consistently enables pupils to make the best possible progress.
- The systematic use of assessment to support pupils' positive engagement in all their lessons.

Information about the school

Beacon Hill Business and Enterprise College is a larger than average special school which forms part of North Tyneside Learning Trust. The school caters for children and young people aged 3 to 19 with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Some of the pupils also have additional autistic spectrum difficulties and others can present severely challenging behaviour. Pupils come from a wide variety of family backgrounds, broadly representative of the local population. Just over a third of the pupils on roll are known to be eligible for free school meals. Most are from a White British heritage, with around five per cent of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Sixth form students from Beacon Hill are taught mainly in their own base on the site of Queen Alexandra Sixth Form College, about five miles distance from the main school. The school secured specialist college status for business and enterprise in its own right in September 2008, having previously developed this specialism through joint designation with Burnside College. The school holds a large number of nationally recognised awards including Investors in People Gold and has also achieved National Support School status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Beacon Hill is an outstanding school. The senior leadership team are exceptionally successful in inspiring staff to be very ambitious and enterprising, while adhering to the highest possible expectations of what the pupils can achieve. Rigorous self-evaluation is always objective and at times bluntly reflective and self-critical. It is used accurately and without compromise to inform the work of all school leaders and managers when identifying and tackling any remaining areas of underperformance. As a consequence, the school has continued to improve strongly since the last inspection, and its capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

This confident and mature school community shares a strong common purpose, striving to meet each pupil's diverse needs and sustaining their active engagement while working towards highly ambitious personal targets. The nature of pupils' difficulties means they are very unlikely to reach the standards expected of mainstream pupils but the outcomes they achieve are nonetheless outstanding considering their individual starting points. They enter school at the earliest stages of learning and development but quickly and exceptionally begin to acquire and consolidate new knowledge and skills. Gradually, over time, their good and frequently exemplary progress builds steadily enabling them to develop into increasingly independent and confident young people. Pupils are almost always enthusiastic and highly committed to achieving their best in all aspects of school life and are curious about the world around them, willing to seize the many new experiences provided by the school's rich and diverse curriculum. The school's specialist status as a business and enterprise college also has a highly positive impact on pupils' learning and engagement, through experiences and understanding of the world of work, independent travel or film making.

Teaching is good and some is outstanding, ensuring that pupils are almost always well motivated and fully engaged. As a result of good assessment arrangements, teachers and teaching assistants already match each pupil's next learning challenge to their individual needs well. However, while target setting is well established and ambitious, school leaders recognise that their use of national comparative data to ensure targets are as rigorous as possible still needs further refinement. The school enjoys highly positive relationships with most groups of parents and carers, regularly seeking their views and keeping them well informed about their children's progress and development. If occasional difficulties arise, school leaders endeavour to resolve them quickly with the families concerned. Despite this positive picture, school leaders remain committed to improving engagement with parents and carers, wherever possible, by ensuring all parents and carers feel as confident as possible about how they can be fully involved with their children's learning and the school's work.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the use of national comparative performance data to help set the most ambitious yet realistic individual pupil targets possible.
- Take further steps to improve the confidence and engagement of parents and carers.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

All pupils have severe and complex special educational needs but despite this achieve exceptionally well. Almost all enter school at the very earliest stages of learning and development. Some hardly appear to move far from their starting points, but extremely accurate assessment confirms they all make at least good progress; albeit in very small steps. This good and often exemplary progress gradually accelerates as they move through the school, enabling many to develop the resilience needed to communicate and interact when tackling new challenges within and beyond school.

In many of the lessons seen, pupils demonstrated an impressive ability to sustain their concentration, often working for extended periods with minimal support from adults. In other situations, such as their work within the film project, pupils showed a remarkable creative ability when generating imaginative characters and engaging storylines. These experiences allow pupils to leave school with appropriate, nationally recognised qualifications that reflect their experiences and skills. Progress is measured against ambitious personal targets; almost all pupils enjoy a high degree of success meeting these targets, and detailed analysis of their development indicates that there is no significant difference between the outcomes for different groups.

Pupils' exemplary behaviour is another key factor that supports their highly successful learning. When students do become distracted or distressed, as happens from time to time, staff intervene quickly and effectively to scale down the potential disruption and get learning back on track. Other pupils show they are highly supportive of each other by remaining calm and staying on task. Pupils say, or show by their confident behaviour, that they feel very safe in the school. They also show a very good sense of right and wrong and an understanding of the factors that contribute towards a healthy lifestyle. Pupils make outstanding contributions to their own and partner school communities. For example, their regular integration into mainstream settings and successful participation in adventurous outdoor challenges and fund-raising activities often confounds and positively influences the limited expectations sometimes still held of young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is consistently effective in ensuring that pupils are well motivated and fully engaged. Teachers and teaching assistants work together seamlessly, sharing equally high, ambitious expectations of the pupils. They continuously monitor the pupils' learning and use this accurate and detailed assessment information well to plan the next, often tiny step, in each pupil's development. This is very important as each class contains a wide range of abilities. Minor weaknesses in the teaching and coverage of numeracy identified in the previous inspection report have been fully addressed and most lessons now proceed at an engaging and brisk pace. Teachers routinely make good use of computers, and interactive switch based technology to enhance or extend learning language and communication. The school is particularly rich in accurate, well moderated, pupils' assessments and uses various forms of comparative performance data to help confirm that pupils make good progress when compared to similar pupils in other settings. However, the school makes more limited use of the national progression guidance in identifying even more challenging targets for the pupils.

The curriculum is outstanding and provides pupils with numerous memorable experiences and rich opportunities to support high quality learning and wider personal development and well-being. As a result, it is particularly well suited to the needs of the pupils, while an

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extensive programme of visits, visitors and residential experiences all adds interest and enjoyment to their learning. The school's business and enterprise status supports highly effective teaching and learning in areas, such as numeracy and information and communication technology, but also permeates many other aspects of the school's work, for example, by supporting learners' engagement and enhancing pupils' confidence and self esteem.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school has created a secure yet aspirational atmosphere that supports pupils' learning and enjoyment extremely successfully. These aspects of the school's work make sure that the vast majority of pupils make the best of the opportunities provided by the school. This is evident in all aspects of the schools work on site, with other schools and agencies and with the vast majority of pupils' families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders and managers, staff and the governing body are all highly ambitious and very successful in their determination to drive improvement and to secure the best possible outcomes for the pupils. The commitment to this principle is evident throughout the life and work of the school and is underpinned by sophisticated and highly effective monitoring and self-evaluation approaches. For example, as a result of determined actions taken by its leaders the quality of teaching has continued to improve since the last inspection and the school's senior leadership team is tireless in their efforts to drive up its quality still further. The governing body makes a purposeful and influential contribution to setting the direction of the school's development. It has a good first-hand knowledge and understanding of the school's work, and conscientiously discharges its statutory duties. Consequently, there is a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues shared among the governing body and staff which has led to the school becoming a leader of high-quality safeguarding practice.

Engagement with external partners, including with local schools, health service professionals and the wider community, is outstanding. For example, well established partnerships with Burnside College and St Bernadette's School both enable high quality learning and social opportunities to be offered to Beacon Hill pupils. Staff contribute particularly effectively to these partnerships by acting as an essential conduit for managing communications and helping to 'join up' the work of external agencies around the needs of the pupils and their families.

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A strong commitment to the needs and rights of the individual child lies at the heart of the school's approach to promoting equality and tackling discrimination, which is highly effective in securing outstanding equality of opportunity. Outcomes are carefully monitored and demonstrate they are equally positive for different groups of pupils. The school itself is a very cohesive community and has a marked beneficial effect on community cohesion within its immediate community and beyond. For example, actively promoting pupils' use of community facilities and local transport systems enhances their visibility and stake in their community, as well as their ability to use such facilities independently in later life.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for children is exceptional. Considerable effort is made to ensure parents and carers understand and are fully involved in the delivery of the education and care of often medically fragile children. While learning is often limited by the nature of the children's developmental difficulties, they make rapid progress because of the careful and sharply observed routine assessments and interventions undertaken by staff to inform the next small steps in their individual programme. A wide range of imaginative stimuli are used to motivate children to engage in experiences that successfully challenge and develop their sensory, motor and thinking skills. Leadership within the Early Years Foundation Stage is highly effective, drawing on a deep understanding of the intricacies of the needs of the children which is effectively shared with the rest of the team. Expectations are very high and welfare and safeguarding requirements are strictly observed.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Sixth form

The sixth form is vibrant, effective and exceptionally well led and managed. It provides a significant and very positive transition experience in the lives of the students, offering real opportunities for purposeful social inclusion alongside mainstream peers. Students continue to make outstanding progress in their academic and personal development as they grow rapidly in both maturity and independence. Teaching is good and often outstanding, underpinned by the excellent relationships that appear to come to fruition as the students and staff prepare for the inevitable move to life beyond school. Even so, staff remain highly ambitious on behalf of the students and show irrepressible delight in their escalating achievements. For example, following the establishment of the school's virtual learning environment, teachers and students are starting to explore the exchange of work over the internet and, once again, more-able students are proving their ability to achieve beyond even their teachers' high expectations.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

An above average proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires. A very large majority of those who did were overwhelmingly supportive of the school's provision and the outcomes it achieves. Safeguarding and the quality of teaching were all rated particularly highly along with the extent to which pupils enjoy school. A very small number of responses took an opposing and polarised view and felt the school should take more account of their suggestions and concerns. This was followed up by an inspector who spoke to some of those involved and scrutinised some pupil case files. These indicated particularly complex case histories, where school staff are still regularly involved in discussions with parents, seeking to improve their confidence in the school's provision.

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Inspectors concluded that relationships with parents and carers are overwhelmingly constructive and these positive views are reflected in the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Beacon Hill School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 56 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 130 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	79	11	20	0	0	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	40	71	14	25	2	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	39	70	14	25	3	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	59	18	32	3	5	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	40	71	13	23	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	59	20	36	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	61	17	30	3	5	1	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	30	54	20	36	2	4	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	64	16	29	4	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	54	21	38	3	5	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	52	23	41	2	4	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	34	61	18	32	3	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	71	12	21	2	4	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beacon Hill School, Wallsend, NE28 9JW

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school.

This is what we found out.

- Your school gives you a very good education and is helping you to achieve extremely well and to develop into confident young people; you are right to be proud to go there.
- You feel very safe and happy because of the outstanding care and support you get from both adults and other children.
- Your teachers and teaching assistants do a really good job so that you enjoy your lessons and make very good progress.
- The staff work hard to help you do as well as you can, but they also take excellent care of you, and you play your part by behaving extremely well.
- The headteacher and those who work with her to lead the school work really hard to give you the very best education they can.

We have asked the school to make sure they set your learning targets at just the right level for each of you, so that you all do as well as you possibly can. We have also asked the school to make sure that they continue to develop ways for parents and carers to be even more involved in supporting your learning and the work of the school.

Yours sincerely

Mr John Farrow

Lead inspector

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