

The Beacon School

Picquets Way, Banstead, Surrey SM7 1AG

Inspection dates

18 – 19 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Examination results have improved during the last year across the vast majority of subjects, so that by the end of Key Stages 4 and 5 students achieve broadly average standards.
- Teaching is good overall, and in some lessons it is outstanding. In most lessons the teachers have high expectations and high levels of mutual respect have been established. This has resulted in a positive learning climate across the academy.
- The good sixth form is led well and, as a result of robust checks by senior leaders and training for staff to improve the quality of sixth form lessons, standards are rising.
- The principal, senior team and governors are relentless in their pursuit of raising standards and their efforts are evident in terms of the students' faster progress and the improving quality of teaching and behaviour.
- Lessons are generally active and engaging. Students mostly enjoy their classroom work.
- Behaviour is usually good in lessons and during social time. Students are well cared for and feel safe. School attendance has improved to above the national figures for secondary schools and the need to use fixed-term exclusions has reduced significantly.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although the achievement of students is good overall, some subjects still need to raise standards, particularly drama, French and history.
- The proportion of lessons where the teaching is outstanding is too low. Expectations have risen, but in some lessons teachers do not provide all students with opportunities to work on their own and stretch their thinking.
- The quality of subject and area leadership is too variable and academy policies and practice are not always implemented consistently in all curriculum areas.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 50 lessons, of which 12 were observed jointly with senior staff.
- Discussions were held with groups of students from each key stage.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body together with another member of the governing body, the principal, senior staff and middle leaders.
- Inspectors evaluated documentation including information on the students' current progress, the curriculum and development plans, as well as procedures and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 30 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, and an additional 77 responses received during the inspection. Inspectors received 73 questionnaires completed by staff and made five telephone calls to parents and carers.
- Inspectors studied the academy's self-evaluation and development plans and clarified the achievement tracking procedures.

Inspection team

Philip Storey, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Caroline Dearden	Additional Inspector
Janet Morrison	Additional Inspector
David Scott	Additional Inspector
Gillian Walley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Beacon School converted to academy status in December 2011.
- The academy is a larger than the average secondary school and accepts students of all abilities.
- The school meets the current government floor standards which set the minimum expectations for secondary schools.
- The vast majority of students are of White British heritage. Less than a fifth are from minority ethnic groups. A very small proportion of students, approximately half the national average, speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action is above average as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what students can achieve through independent work
 - asking more searching questions in order to develop students' thinking skills, particularly for the more able
 - providing students with activities to investigate new ideas in more depth
 - ensuring that the emphasis already placed on extended writing as well as checks on spelling and grammar is fully adopted by all teachers.
- Strengthen the impact of subject and area leaders by ensuring that:
 - the academy's new system for checking and analysing information on students' progress is used by all staff to accelerate progress still further
 - best practice is shared and embedded across all staff.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the academy in Year 7 with standards in line with national averages. However, Key Stages 4 and 5 students started their school careers with below average levels of attainment.
- Standards have risen rapidly over the last two years and are now average at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form.
- As a result of improved teaching, close monitoring and well-targeted support, progress accelerates through Key Stage 3 so that by the end of Year 11 the majority of students make good progress and achieve well.
- The students' performance in GCSE mathematics is rising at a faster rate than the national picture. Students also achieve well in all areas of GCSE science.
- There has been a significant reduction in the variation in GCSE performance across subjects since the summer 2011, though some inconsistencies still remain. A greater proportion of students are now achieving A and A* grades at GCSE in the science subjects and in art. The percentage of students achieving A and A* grades is higher than the national picture in these subjects. However, in drama, English literature and French, the percentage of students achieving these grades is lower than the national average.
- Students supported by the additional funds derived from the pupil premium grant achieve well. This is as a result of the careful targeting of this additional resource towards improving performance in English, mathematics and literacy development. At GCSE, the average points score (APS) for this group rose at a faster rate than the entire Year 11 cohort at the academy and nationally.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is due to good teaching and effective additional literacy support.
- Achievement in the sixth form has improved and is now good. This is due to enhanced systems for tracking students' progress as well as improvements in the quality of teaching and adaptations to the curriculum offer. Post-16 students, however, do less well in history, geography, drama and physics than in English, biology, mathematics and media studies.
- A small minority of students are entered for GCSE examinations early and unless an A* grade has been achieved students continue to work to improve their grades until the end of Year 11.

The quality of teaching is good

- Overall, the quality of teaching is good and a small proportion is outstanding. For example, in an outstanding Year 11 mathematics lesson, a discussion about how to apply algebra to everyday situations was fuelled by extremely skilled questioning from the teacher. This resulted in high levels of interest from the students. Students were enthusiastic and keen to deepen their learning by asking their own searching questions.
- The quality of teaching is good in mathematics and science. The positive actions already taken in the English department are reflected in the mostly good teaching in the majority of lessons.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are well supported. Access to additional literacy support is having a marked impact on their progress, including their reading.
- Where teaching is good, teachers plan carefully to meet the needs of students of different abilities. Teachers check progress and understanding thoroughly and know how to reshape teaching and learning activities in response to students' feedback.
- In the few cases where teaching is less successful:
 - students lack the resilience to work on their own or together for sustained periods of time, limiting their progress and depth of understanding

- there is a lack of challenge particularly for the most able students
- the quality of marking and feedback is not effective in ensuring the progress of students, especially in developing their literacy skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' attitudes to learning are positive and behaviour is consistently good.
- In all observed lessons where teaching was good, the behaviour and attitude to learning were good. The academy's records show that the use of fixed-term exclusions is declining rapidly. Specific support is in place to address any potential behaviour issues. In meetings with students, the majority believed that behaviour has improved in recent years and that it is now good.
- Individual case studies demonstrate marked improvements in behaviour as a consequence of a wide range of strategies such as encouraging students to attend a countryside and environment course, social skills classes and additional literacy support to increase access to the curriculum. Rewards for positive behaviour have had a marked impact on students.
- Students feel safe and happy in school. They are aware of the different forms of victimisation, such as cyber bullying, racism and homophobia, as well as how to keep themselves safe. The school deals effectively with the few instances of bullying. Students and staff are clearly aware of how to deal with such incidents and good procedures are well established.
- Attendance at parents' evenings and curriculum events has risen to more than 75%. This increased level of parental involvement has contributed to the positive behaviour demonstrated by the overwhelming majority of students.
- Students' attendance has improved and, as a result of regular checks by school leaders, is now above average and continues to improve. The proportion of students who regularly miss school has continued to fall and is less than the national average. Attendance has improved significantly in the sixth form.
- The school's positive atmosphere supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Activities such as forming a partnership with a school in India have contributed well to the development of students' appreciation of different cultures.
- The large majority of parents and carers responding to Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire, agreed that there is a good standard of behaviour at the academy. The very large majority of parents and carers would recommend the academy to other parents and carers. Staff were equally positive about the good behaviour and relationships at the academy, with a very small minority dissenting.

The leadership and management are good

- The principal provides strong leadership and where changes have been made these have had a striking effect. For example, a more rigorous approach to monitoring, support and intervention of students and staff has resulted in standards improving. The principal is well supported by the senior leadership team. Together, they demonstrate an ability to strive continually to improve outcomes further.
- The quality of subject and area leadership has improved significantly but needs to be more highly consistent in ensuring that academy policies and procedures are well embedded and fully implemented across all areas of the curriculum.
- The academy's self-evaluation and improvement plans are prioritised, clear and detailed.
- The academy has a broad and balanced curriculum which provides well-considered pathways for

students with a variety of aspirations and abilities. The curriculum has been adapted to ensure that there is sufficient opportunity for literacy development, including extended writing. Some subjects, however, do not provide enough opportunities to support students' basic skills, despite this being a high priority for the school.

- The quality of teaching is monitored rigorously and the judgements made by leaders were well matched to inspectors' judgements during joint lesson observations. Where teaching requires improvement, teachers receive additional coaching and this has contributed well to improvements in teaching.
- As a result of robust arrangements for managing teachers' performance, only those teachers who meet the required high standards, as judged by the principal, are able to move up the salary scale.
- Senior leaders are careful to ensure all students are able to participate in all activities and that there is no discrimination.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - provides good support and challenge for the principal, ensures that the performance of staff is monitored effectively and takes well-considered action when interventions are necessary
 - is kept well informed about students' progress, the quality of teaching as well as behaviour and exclusions
 - checks closely on the strategic direction of the school, directing its resources to drive its priorities forward. This includes ensuring that appropriate funds are directed to students attracting the pupil premium
 - manages the budget well.

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	137735
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	406682

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1204
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Latham
Principal	Lisa Croke
Date of previous school inspection	Not applicable (converter academy)
Telephone number	01737 359103
Fax number	01737 365200
Email address	info@beacon.surrey.sch.uk

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