

Beacon Community College

East Beeches Road, Crowborough, East Sussex, TN6 2AS

Inspection dates 18–19 April 2013

| 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 | Outstanding | 1 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students throughout the college make good progress from their starting points and achieve well.
- Senior leaders' relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching has resulted in it being consistently good, with examples of outstanding practice in several areas.
- Leaders have introduced sophisticated and highly effective systems which mean that any potential underachievement by students is identified quickly and swiftly remedied.
- Students behave well around the college and in lessons. They feel very safe and have very few concerns about bullying.
- Leaders have succeeded in sharing their ambitious vision for the college with all the staff, and manage their performance extremely effectively. As a result, the college continues to improve rapidly.
- Leaders make sure that the range of subjects and topics the college offers closely matches the needs and interests of all groups of students. The wide variety of experiences and opportunities from which students benefit promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very successfully.
- The governing body is strongly committed to ensuring that the school provides the best possible service to its students and to the community. Members set challenging targets for school leaders and hold them firmly to account for the quality of teaching and for students' achievement.
- The sixth form is good. Leaders make sure that any variation in the quality of teaching is tackled effectively, so that it is consistently good or better. Students are highly appreciative of the help and support they receive from their teachers.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students are not always fully engaged or make as much progress as they could.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not give students enough opportunities to work independently, or include enough stimulating or varied activities to maintain their interest.
- Not all teachers give students sufficiently detailed written feedback about their work to enable them to know exactly what they need to do next to improve its quality.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 49 lessons taught by 48 teachers, six of them together with school leaders. They also looked at students' written work, made shorter visits to a number of other lessons, and attended an assembly and several tutor-group meetings.
- Inspectors held discussions with groups of students, four members of the Governing Body, including the Chair, and members of staff.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on students' attainment, progress and attendance. They examined safeguarding procedures and records of the school's own lesson observations, and examined self-evaluation and planning documents.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, inspectors took account of 124 responses to the online survey (Parent View), which were submitted before and during the inspection, as well as parents' responses to the school's own most recent survey, a letter and three emails from parents, and 54 questionnaires completed by members of the teaching and support staff.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Robin Gaff, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Jennifer Bray | Additional Inspector |
| Jenny Usher | Additional Inspector |
| Tim Royle | Additional Inspector |
| Brian Oppenheim | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- About one in ten students is supported through school action, which is just below the national average. About one in ten students is supported at school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs. This proportion is above the national average.
- Just under one in eight students is eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided for children in local authority care, children of service families and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals. This is well below the national average. There are no children from service families currently on the school's roll.
- About one in five Year 7 students is eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium, which is provided by the government to support those students who have not previously reached the expected levels in English and mathematics.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Beacon Community College converted to become an academy school in April 2012. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Since its last inspection, the college has completed a major rebuilding programme, on both the main school and sixth form sites, including the new Creative Learning Centre.
- The college shares its site with a local special school, Grove Park School, some of whose students attend lessons at the college.
- A small number of the college's students follow courses provided by a local college of further education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching is at least good, so that students make good or outstanding progress in all lessons, by ensuring that all teachers
 - give students sufficient opportunities to learn on their own and from each other
 - include enough varied and stimulating activities in their lessons
 - provide students with sufficiently detailed and specific written comments on their work to enable them to know what steps they need to take next to improve it.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the college in Year 7 with levels of attainment which are generally below average for their age group. In 2012, standards at GCSE, in terms of the proportion of students who gained at least five grades A* to C including English and mathematics, were above the national average. The school's robust and reliable information about the attainment of current Year 11 students indicates that standards are set to rise still further. This means that students are making good progress from their starting points.
- Not all students in 2012 attained the highest grades of which they were capable, especially in mathematics, where almost all students took GCSE examinations early, at the end of Year 10. The school, however, has now amended this policy. All students have been entered this year for mathematics at the end of Year 11, with the result that a much higher proportion are on course to gain the highest grades.
- Students in the sixth form also make good progress, in a range of advanced level courses, and gain qualifications and skills which enable almost all to proceed to employment, work-based training, or higher education, many of them at universities with demanding entrance requirements.
- In 2012, the attainment of students who were eligible for the pupil premium, as indicated by their performance at GCSE, was below that of other students in the college and of all students nationally. In English, grades gained by these students were just over a grade lower than those of all other students in the college, and just over half a grade lower than those achieved by all students nationally. In mathematics, there was a gap of almost two grades with other students in the college, and of about one-and-a-half grades with all students nationally.
- The college, however, has made very good use of the additional pupil-premium money to provide additional teaching and support for this group of students. As a result, current students who are eligible for this extra funding are now making good progress, as are students who benefit from the Year 7 catch-up premium, and the gap is narrowing between their attainment and that of all students nationally.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs also make good or better progress in a range of subjects because of the effective support they receive from teaching assistants, and because teachers adapt activities to meet their individual needs.
- The college ensures that the small number of students who follow work-related courses at a local college of further of education are well suited to them. Their tutors receive regular reports about their progress and intervene promptly if there is any evidence of underperformance. This results in these students achieving well in gaining qualifications which enable them to progress to higher level courses, or directly to employment.
- Students enjoy and are keen to talk about books they read. The college has successfully organised special events, such as the recent 'Drop everything and read' event, to promote the importance of reading.
- In many lessons, students participate enthusiastically and make at least good progress in acquiring a range of skills. This was the case, for example, in a Year 10 physical education lesson, when boys with a wide variety of skill levels made excellent progress in learning the techniques they needed for the high jump. This was because the teacher gave them clear and precise instructions, monitored their progress carefully and enabled them to use a tablet computer to evaluate and improve their own performance.
- When progress is slower, this is usually because students have not been given sufficiently stimulating or varied activities, or because teachers take too long to explain tasks before allowing students to work independently.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers establish good working relations with students and have high expectations of them in terms of both work and behaviour.
- Teachers mostly plan a good variety of activities in their lessons, and ensure that they proceed at a good pace. They stretch students with different levels of ability sufficiently so that all can make at least good progress. They make sure, for example, that disabled students and those with special educational needs can work on tasks which are at the right level to engage their interest and enable them to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. Well-deployed teaching assistants enable these students to play a full part in lessons, and to make at least good progress.
- When teaching is at its best, teachers make sure that students have a very clear understanding of what they need to do to produce their best work, give them plenty of opportunities to work on their own, and adapt activities during lessons so that students can learn and make as much progress as possible. For example, in an outstanding health-and-social-care lesson, Year 11 students worked extremely hard throughout the session, with very little prompting from the teacher, on individual assignments. This enabled them to reach their target levels by choosing their own approach to the topic in line with the grades for which they were aiming. The teacher checked their progress very carefully, prompting them and giving each one highly appropriate help and advice when they needed it. At the end of the lesson, she enabled the students to recap and reinforce what they had learned, and gave them individually tailored additional tasks to extend their learning.
- On a few occasions, however, teachers do not give students enough time to work on their own, or provide them with sufficiently detailed written feedback and guidance to enable them to understand what they are doing well and what would make their work even better.
- Lessons in the sixth form are characterised by teachers' high levels of knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, their subjects, and their ability to share them with students. Students comment very favourably on their teachers' approachability and their willingness to give them extra help and support outside normal lesson time.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students say they enjoy their college experience, and they are well motivated towards their studies. Their behaviour in lessons and around the college is good. This is also the case for students who attend lessons at the further education college.
- Students are attentive and respectful to their teachers, and most participate enthusiastically in activities. On the rare occasions when behaviour is not good, this is generally related to the quality of teaching and the fact that lesson activities are not sufficiently stimulating or varied.
- Students feel very safe in college and have few concerns about bullying. The small number who say they have experienced it report that staff have acted promptly and effectively to resolve the problem. Students know about and understand the different forms that bullying can take, including cyber- and prejudice-related bullying
- Students attend regularly, and arrive promptly at their lessons. Staff, working closely with parents, have succeeded in improving the attendance of those students whose absences have adversely affected their learning.
- The college can also point to many examples of how it has improved the behaviour of those students who did not live up to its expectations. It has substantially reduced the number of occasions when students have to be excluded.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View and the college's own most recent survey agreed that it makes sure students are well behaved and that they feel safe in college. Staff share the same view.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The principal has considerably strengthened the senior leadership team since the college converted to academy status, and leaders at all levels are passionately committed to improving further the quality of teaching and the range of subjects and topics it offers, and thereby students' achievement. This indicates the college's capacity for further improvement.
 - The college has greatly improved its systems for identifying any potential underachievement by groups of students and individuals. This has very much enhanced its ability to provide additional support where it is most needed, and, as a result, higher and middle attaining students, as well as those known to be eligible for pupil-premium funding, are now making faster progress.
 - The college has successfully narrowed gaps in achievement between different groups of students, and has made sure that disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve well. This, together with the harmonious relations between students from different backgrounds, demonstrates its success in promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating any potential discrimination.
 - By very regularly observing lessons and providing robust and incisive feedback to teachers, followed by individually tailored support to those who need it, leaders are rapidly improving the quality of teaching. The college has developed excellent systems and procedures for managing staff performance, setting demanding but realistic targets, and holding staff rigorously to account for their progress towards achieving them.
 - Leaders keep the range of subjects and topics constantly under review, and have successfully refined it to ensure that it matches the needs and interests of students of all ages and abilities, including those in the sixth form.
 - The principal, working with the Governing Body, has made good use of available funding to improve the college's premises and facilities, including the extremely well equipped Creative Learning Centre. This has led to improvements to students' achievement and well-being, and to their preparation for the next stage of their education and for employment.
 - Students benefit from a wide range of opportunities to reflect on moral and social issues, to learn about different cultures, and to take part in musical and other creative activities, many of which they help to organise. This indicates the college's strength in promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - The college has maintained the strong partnerships which its predecessor school had established with local primary schools and the special school with which it shares its site. These benefit pupils and students at the college itself as well as those who attend other institutions. As an academy, the college no longer receives support from the local authority. It does, however, share good practice and benefit from its cooperation with other local secondary schools.
 - A very large majority of parents agree that the college provides them with valuable information about their children's progress, and that it responds well to any concerns they raise.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school well because they visit it often and receive regular, detailed reports from senior staff. They have an accurate understanding of students' achievement, and how it compares with that of students in other schools nationally, and of the quality of teaching. They know how pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is being used to improve the achievement of those students who are eligible for it. They use their skills, which they update by undertaking regular training, to hold leaders rigorously to account, and to make sure that the college makes very good use of available resources. As a result, the college's financial status is sound. Governors also make sure that any pay increases and promotions for teachers are closely related to successful performance in their roles, including the achievement of personal and college targets. They also ensure that the college meets all current requirements for safeguarding students.
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What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 137982 |
| Local authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 412865 |

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

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| Type of school | Academy converter |
| School category | Community |
| 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 | 1471 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 380 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Barry Langridge |
| Principal | Peter Swan |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 01892 603000 |
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