

Beacon Hill Community School

Market Square, Aspatia, Wigton, Cumbria, CA7 3EZ

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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 school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' progress is not yet consistently fast enough across the school. Students' results in examinations have not been as high as they should be.
- Recent improvements to systems to track students' progress and give them extra help when needed are already having an impact on speeding up students' progress. However, they have not yet been fully checked nor have they had time to make an impact on students' examination results at the end of Year 11.
- A minority of teaching requires improvement.
- Links with primary schools are not strong enough to ensure that teachers' expertise in assessing students' progress and helping students to improve their literacy and numeracy skills are fully shared.

The school has the following strengths

- It is improving rapidly because, under the very effective leadership of the headteacher, governors, leaders and managers have tackled weaknesses in teaching and improved the way in which students' progress is tracked. Consequently, students' achievement is improving.
- They school has wisely invested pupil premium money in extra staff and resources to intervene much earlier in eligible students' learning if they need extra help. Consequently, students' achievement is improving.
- Students say they feel safe in school. Their behaviour is good. Most enjoy learning and participate enthusiastically in the wide range of learning experiences that the school provides.
- Teaching is mostly good and is continuing to improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons and part-lessons which included a joint lesson observation with the headteacher and short visits to classrooms with the deputy headteacher. They also listened to students read and observed the teaching of literacy and numeracy to smaller groups of students.
- Discussions were held with parents, students, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at students' books, progress data, safeguarding information and other documentation.
- Seventeen responses to the on-line questionnaire 'Parent View' were considered as well as those from school staff.

Inspection team

Ann Ashdown, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bernard Robinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is above average.
- A well-below average proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and none speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is above average while the proportion supported at school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school has specialist status in technology and is part of the Rural Academy of Cumbria.
- The school uses the alternative provision provided by the West Cumbria Achievement Zone for a very small number of students in Year 11.
- A well-above average proportion of students joins and leaves the school partway through their education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teaching is at least good to raise attainment and further speed up students' progress by :
 - eradicating the very small amount of teaching that requires improvement and ensuring more teaching is outstanding
 - making sure that all students are challenged to achieve their very best in every lesson
 - checking how well new ways of tracking students' progress are working and improve them further if necessary
 - checking exactly how much difference the early, extra help that students are being given is making to their rates of progress and build upon this work even further.
- Work more closely with feeder primary schools to ensure there is continuity in students' learning by:
 - fully sharing teachers' expertise in accurately assessing how well students are achieving
 - identifying exactly where students need extra help, particularly in developing their literacy and numeracy skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter the school with standards which are below national averages. Each year group is very small and is made up of more lower-attaining students and fewer higher-attaining students than is found nationally.
- Examination results in 2011 and 2012 show that the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, were significantly below national averages and their progress did not compare favourably with that found nationally. Consequently, students' achievement requires improvement.
- However, the work in current students' books, that seen in lessons and the school's own progress data all confirm that, although progress is not yet consistently fast enough, it is now speeding up. This is because teaching has improved, progress is tracked more effectively and extra help is given more quickly to students who need it.
- The school has made good use of pupil premium money to provide small group and one-to-one tuition to help those students who are eligible for free school meals to make faster progress. Although these students were still a grade behind other groups of students in GCSE English, they achieved similar results to their classmates in mathematics. Their progress in both subjects was in line with that of other students.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, those who join the school partway through their education and those few from minority ethnic backgrounds all make the same progress as other groups of students because they receive very timely and well-focused help from both teachers and teaching assistants.
- Improving students' literacy skills is a priority and the library is a hub of the school. Displays, notices and information about reading events and competitions are seen throughout the school. High quality paired reading, where older students team up with younger ones, is very successful in improving students' reading skills and helping them to read fluently and with expression and meaning.
- In mathematics, students were seen making good progress during a high quality, small group session where the teacher's clear explanations and encouragement built students' confidence in handling numbers. Students are given good opportunities to use their mathematical skills in other subjects, for example, in collecting and analysing weather information in geography.
- The school's use of early entry to examinations varies from year to year to meet the needs of their small number of students. Last year, early entry in mathematics for a small number of students allowed them to reach their potential and gain confidence from early examination success.
- The school makes use of alternative provision for a very small number of students who are better suited to a more practical, vocational programme of study. Records show that students attend this provision regularly, are kept safe and behave well. Regular reports indicate that they are making good progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- At Beacon Hill weaknesses in teaching are quickly tackled, good practice is shared and teaching is improving. Students respond well to the good teaching they receive both in full classes and small groups and this is now having a real impact on raising their achievement. Teaching is rarely less than good and a small amount of teaching is outstanding.
- Teachers know their students extremely well and work is closely tailored to their individual needs, particularly when they are receiving extra help and being taught in small groups. It is already clear from assessment data that giving students sharply focused extra help early in their school life is improving their literacy and numeracy skills. However, this school recognises the

need to keep checking how much difference this is making and improve this work even further.

- Teachers and teaching assistants use praise well and through a range of interesting activities they engage students in learning and give them the confidence to succeed. In a history lesson the teaching assistant worked seamlessly with the teacher to give students constructive advice and support as they revised their work for examinations.
- In an English lesson students made good progress as they confidently gave presentations to the class and answered questions from their classmates. The teacher used very skilful and perceptive questioning which allowed students to develop their answers and extend their understanding.
- In most lessons all groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, achieve well because work is challenging and they move on quickly to the next task when they are ready. In a few lessons, the pace of learning slows when tasks are too long or too easy and all students are not fully challenged to achieve their best.
- Students' work is marked regularly and thoroughly and has a focus on improving literacy skills and correcting spellings. They receive high quality feedback which helps them to reach their targets.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in lessons. They have good opportunities to share ideas and information, develop their speaking and listening skills and discuss sensitive moral issues.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students have good attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed. In lessons most students answer questions readily, work hard and present their work well. Records show that students typically behave well both in lessons and around the school.
- In this very small secondary school the views and talents of individual students are equally valued; discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and all have equal opportunities to succeed. A welcoming, friendly atmosphere pervades the school.
- Students say they feel safe in school. They are knowledgeable about different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying but say that these are rare in school and are quickly dealt with. Parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View, also feel that their children are kept safe and are pleased with the education the school provides.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe and have a sensible attitude to taking risks. Year 7 students really enjoyed learning about how to respond in an emergency as they enthusiastically put their classmates into the recovery position.
- Students and their parents are very appreciative of the good personal support the school gives. Those students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are confident that there are always members of staff they can turn to and that help from outside experts is available should they need it.
- Students are keen to take responsibility and, for example, happily listen to younger students read or organise fund-raising events for charity.
- Most students attend school regularly and attendance is close to average. The numbers of students who are excluded are small.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well and, with very good support from governors, leaders and managers and all staff, has been instrumental in bringing about improvements. Any weaknesses are quickly tackled. These improvements, particularly in teaching, in tracking students' progress and in providing timely extra help for students who need it, are now helping all students to make better progress.
- However, students' achievement is not yet good because recent improvements have not yet

been fully checked and have not had time to have a sustained impact on achievement or be reflected in better examination results.

- Teaching has improved because lessons are observed regularly and teachers are given constructive help and high quality training to help them improve their skills. Their performance is managed well and staff questionnaires show that teachers feel valued and morale is high.
- Staff share their skills with each other and also learn from best practice in other schools. However, links with feeder primary schools are underdeveloped. Teachers' skills in assessing how well students are achieving and exactly where they need extra help are not shared sufficiently to ensure students continue to make the best progress when they move between schools.
- Safeguarding meets requirements. Staff are fully trained in child protection and risk assessment procedures.
- The school values the good support it receives from the local authority. This has included a recent whole-school review, support for subject departments and specific training to further improve teaching.
- The curriculum meets the needs of individual students particularly well and also very successfully promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has a good focus on English and mathematics but also provides a balance of academic and vocational courses for students to study at GCSE level. The school's technology college status has a positive impact. All students enjoy following a flexible range of technology courses in which they achieve well. They also benefit from a very wide range of activities which enrich the curriculum. Students talk enthusiastically about the residential visits they have been on, about maintaining and completing long-distance rides on the school's bikes and about horticulture courses and working in the school polytunnel. They mention a wealth of field trips, sporting activities and drama productions they have been involved in.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved since the previous inspection and governors now use their expertise to provide good levels of support and challenge for the school. Governors are well trained. They monitor the work of the school and know its strengths and weaknesses. They are knowledgeable about how staff performance is managed, how staff are rewarded and how weaknesses are tackled. They hold the school to account for how pupil premium money is spent and are kept well informed about how the school is performing compared to schools nationally.

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	112375
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	412839

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Trevor Gear
Headteacher	Julie Richardson
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2009
Telephone number	01697 320509
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