

Beech Hill School

Mount Pleasant Avenue, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX1 5TN

Inspection dates

19–20 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher is a passionate leader with a meticulous eye for detail who has an exceptional knowledge of the pupils and families she serves.
- The members of the leadership team are inspirational teachers, leading by example. They have robustly supported the headteacher in monitoring, evaluating and improving teaching across the academy.
- Children start at the academy with abilities well below those typical for their age. Teaching in the early years is highly effective in developing children's confidence and speaking and listening skills, providing an excellent platform from which to learn in Year 1.
- Pupils' achievements are impressive. Pupils make rapid progress as they move through the academy so that by Year 6, the progress pupils have made is above that of pupils that seen nationally in English and significantly above in mathematics.
- This is a very inclusive academy. Many pupils join at different points in the academic year. New pupils are welcomed and teaching is provided to enable them to make rapid progress, particularly in acquiring English.
- Teaching is never less than good and much is outstanding. Consequently, pupils who have attended the academy for sustained periods make outstanding progress.
- Leaders and teachers are committed to providing the very best experiences for pupils and together they are developing an outstanding curriculum.
- The work of staff to involve parents in their child's education is very successful at all key stages and particularly helps children in the early years to get off to an excellent start.
- The work of teaching assistants is highly effective in supporting pupils to learn well. This is particularly the case in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and in reading.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highly successful and is outstanding.
- Pupils are very involved in decision making about issues that concern them in the academy. Pupils really enjoy school and this is reflected in very positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour in lessons and around the academy is exceptional and pupils say they feel very safe.
- Governors are regular visitors to the academy and understand its effectiveness. However, they do not rigorously hold leaders to account.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the skills of governors to more effectively challenge academy leaders and hold them to account.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher is resulting in a highly ambitious team whose members are intent on providing the best experiences possible for Beech Hill pupils. Her accurate view of the performance of all pupils and a deep understanding of families and of the community show that she understands the needs of all in her care.
- Senior leaders, working very cohesively with the headteacher, are ensuring an exceptionally high quality of learning for pupils. Rigorous procedures are in place to check the quality of teaching and rates of progress for all groups of pupils within the academy.
- Deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers at the academy are highly skilled in developing the teaching of others. Two are specialist leaders of education and provide support to other schools in the area. They closely mentor and support teachers new to Beech Hill to ensure they blossom into highly effective teachers. Several teachers deliver lectures to trainee teachers on a university course. As a consequence of their work, staff are constantly discussing the best way to teach and are highly responsive to pupils' needs.
- Leaders provide an outstanding curriculum which includes a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop literacy, mathematics and a wide range of other skills. It is enriched by high-quality drama, forest skills and music taught by specialists. Teachers run many extra-curricular activities each week to extend pupils' experiences in computing, sewing, art and gardening, for example. Pupils took part in a 'bake-off' to raise funds, and some are 'junior wardens', litter picking and looking after the local community. Pupils are excited by the wide range of trips, to Blackpool Zoo, to London, or to the seaside for example. Pupils have delivered Eid or anti-bullying assemblies at other schools and have worked with pupils from the pupil referral unit to encourage teamwork.
- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain through the lessons they receive and through many planned opportunities to meet with people from all walks of life. They display high degrees of tolerance and respect for different faiths and cultures.
- The academy has employed a sports coach using the primary sports funding to ensure pupils participate in a range of sports. Funding is also used to ensure that all Reception children go swimming, impacting very positively on children's confidence.
- Extra money provided to the academy to support disadvantaged pupils is used wisely to provide a range of additional support, for example to provide breakfast to disadvantaged pupils and to employ an attendance officer. The impact of this spending shows that pupils' attendance is improving and pupils are better prepared to start their learning. Bilingual support assistants are employed to ensure excellent communication with pupils and their parents who are new to English.
- Excellent relationships are formed with parents. Leaders are truly consultative and are highly respected in the community. Parents are welcomed into the academy for assemblies and for a weekly coffee morning to meet with leaders. Pupils and parents attend the annual school improvement event, where the whole academy community decides what it needs to improve in the coming year. They speak enthusiastically of the changes brought about by leaders. They feel that their views are welcomed and have informed decisions on behaviour policies and on aspects of safety.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors visit the academy regularly and have linked responsibility to areas of the academy's work. This gives them a good understanding of the academy's performance and they understand how the academy compares with others.
 - Governors are extremely well informed by the headteacher on all aspects of the academy's work, including the impact of pupil premium funding and school sports funding. However, governors' absolute trust in the work of academy leaders is preventing them from asking really searching questions and holding leaders more rigorously to account.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff and governors have received appropriate training to help keep pupils safe and staff are aware of the risks of radicalisation. There are designated safeguarding staff at every key stage in the academy and as a result a strong culture of safeguarding prevails.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- As a result of very skilful mentoring from academy leaders, teachers have excellent subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils' progress. Teachers express great ambition for what their pupils can achieve. This is a very reflective staff. Teachers learn from each other and regularly discuss the best way to teach pupils in their classes.
- Teachers capture pupils' interest through exciting topics which make pupils eager to learn. Teachers take considerable care to plan sequences of lessons that will build on pupils' prior knowledge and build skills in reading, writing and mathematics in particular. This attention to detail is resulting in pupils making rapid progress.
- The teaching of phonics is highly effective in helping all pupils, but particularly those who are new to English, to make a rapid start in reading and writing. Teachers and teaching staff are involved in the tight organisation of lessons to ensure that no learning time is wasted.
- Leaders and teachers have identified the need to build pupils' ability to speak with confidence and have introduced many opportunities to present their learning to others, for example during assemblies. Pupils take part in termly poetry readings and Year 6 pupils recently delivered a presentation on their learning during a parents' evening. These planned events are having a positive impact and many pupils have grown in confidence in speaking to adults as a result.
- The teaching of reading in the early years and Key Stage 1 is very effective in equipping pupils to work out unknown words and develop an understanding of the text. Less able readers receive encouragement from teaching assistants, but use their own knowledge to help them segment and blend words.
- Reading records clearly show that pupils read a wide range of texts. The teaching of reading is well planned and systematically leading to pupils confidently responding to questions about texts and successfully applying their skills by the end of Year 6. Independence in reading is successfully promoted by the academy: pupils in Key Stage 2 are proud to explain that they can use an online reading assessment and look up their own reading targets.
- Teachers have a deep understanding of how to develop their pupils as writers. They are successfully teaching pupils to write through series of well-planned and resourced lessons, supporting pupils through each stage of the process. Teachers foster independence, offering pupils regular opportunities to check their own progress and that of their peers. As a result of excellent teaching, pupils made very good progress in writing last year and the most-able pupils attained the highest Level 6.
- High-quality mathematics teaching is helping pupils of all ages to succeed. Learning is very well matched to the ability of pupils and practical investigations are encouraged so that pupils readily attack problems and are developing mastery in mathematics. By the end of Year 6, pupils are extremely competent in mathematics and make progress in excess of most pupils nationally.
- Teachers' awareness and careful planning ensure that the achievement of pupils for whom the academy receives pupil premium funding matches that of other pupils nationally.
- Teachers use information technology extremely well to further develop pupils' learning. Pupils have made films and regularly use tablet computers to research or record work. Pupils are used to photographing their work and compiling evidence of their own learning.
- Teachers have very high expectations of presentation and of the amount of work pupils will do in lessons and consequently, pupils take immense pride in their work and present their books extremely well. This is particularly evident in topic books when pupils have choice over how to present their learning.
- The work of teaching assistants is highly effective in supporting pupils in their learning. They work alongside teachers, sympathetically questioning and challenging pupils, using the academy mantra 'show not tell' in order to encourage independence in pupils. Teaching assistants also provide additional lessons for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to support them to make at least good progress in reading and writing.
- Pupils are responding very well to the advice given to them by their teachers. Teachers are highly consistent in their application of the academy's marking policy. Pupils understand what is expected of them and regularly improve their work as a result of teachers' comments.

- Pupils receive regular homework to support effectively their learning in reading, spelling and mathematics. Pupils are also encouraged to show their creativity in homework and have made model Tudor houses as part of a history topic, for example. Parents are particularly impressed that homework is carefully planned to involve parents, reinforcing the important role of parents in their child's education. A homework club runs each week for those pupils who have been unable to receive support at home.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Leaders ensure that pupils have many opportunities to celebrate their successes, through assemblies, in newsletters and in texts home to parents. Parents express a high degree of satisfaction in this aspect of the academy's work.
- Pupils demonstrate impressive resilience in their learning. They understand that learning should involve challenge and there is much evidence in books to show that pupils have embraced opportunities to improve and extend their learning.
- The academy has gained recognised awards showing the depth of its work to promote social, moral, spiritual and cultural values. This is leading to pupils having a deep understanding of the rights of others and of global issues. Older pupils talk confidently and demonstrate their understanding of different faiths and cultures through cross-curricular studies.
- Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through the teeth-cleaning programme and regular opportunities to engage in sports taught by a physical education specialist. Facilities are excellent and include a new multi-use games area, a climbing facility and a forest area, so that pupils' experience of the outdoors is leading to high-quality learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. In the vast majority of lessons, pupils are attentive and follow instructions quickly. Academy leaders consulted widely with parents and pupils when they introduced a new system to promote outstanding behaviour. As a result, parents can see improvements in the behaviour of their children at home and it is now rare for pupils to step out of line at school.
- Pupils are extremely proud of their academy and exhibit excellent attitudes to learning. This was particularly evident when Year 6 'reading buddies' joined with younger pupils to support them in reading.
- The academy has gained many awards that have helped pupils to learn about and demonstrate respect and kindness for others. Year 6 pupils won a competition to make an anti-bullying film with a national television company, and some were selected to meet Prince William to explain this work. As a result, pupils have an understanding about the types of bullying and how to keep safe on the internet. The very comprehensive work done by pupils on e-safety and safety in the community is helping them to feel safe.
- Academy leaders, with the support of the attendance officer, have robustly worked to remove barriers to regular attendance for some pupils. As a result, attendance is now at the national average and the number of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen dramatically.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Children enter the Nursery at stages of development well below those typical for their age. Children's language and communication skills are particularly weak. A high proportion of children enter the setting with little or no English and many do not talk confidently in their home language. Despite this, over time the academy has successfully improved the proportion of children leaving Reception with a good level of development so that it is now in line with national averages.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has risen significantly over a three-year period and is now above that seen nationally.

- School assessment information shows that current pupils make excellent progress, given their starting points, across all year groups and in all subjects. The most-able pupils achieve exceptionally well and in Year 6 this is leading to some attaining the very high Level 6 in writing and mathematics.
- Many more pupils than normally seen enter and leave Beech Hill during the school year. For this reason, external data do not accurately reflect the impact of the academy on pupils' attainment at Key Stage 1. Over a fifth of pupils taking tests at the end of Year 2 in 2015 were not in the academy at the start of the school year, and a fifth of pupils were disabled or had special educational needs. However, all pupils who started school at the academy made strong gains during Key Stage 1 and those pupils for whom the academy receives pupil premium funding achieved as well as others. Those pupils who need to catch up receive much focused teaching, individually or in groups, to acquire basic skills quickly so that they can make speedy progress from low starting points.
- At Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils making or exceeding expected progress in reading and writing was above the national average in 2015. Pupils' progress in mathematics was significantly above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils made slightly better progress than other pupils, and there was little difference between the progress of boys and that of girls. From their starting points, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make progress almost in line with others in school and better than disabled pupils nationally.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Children are speedily helped to settle into the Nursery by highly skilled staff. Staff are highly sensitive to the particular needs of two-year-olds, helping them to explore safely and to engage in repetitive play, modelling to encourage next steps in learning. As a result of sensitive teaching for two- and three-year-olds, concentrated on developing children's attention, confidence, vocabulary and physical skills, children are very quickly prepared for learning in the Reception class.
- From very low starting points, almost two thirds of children attained expected levels in reading, writing and number and all made outstanding progress. Excellent relationships with staff are helping children to feel safe. Regular checks on equipment and risk assessments on activities, in Nursery and Reception, ensure children's safety.
- The early years leader is highly motivated and determined that children will develop rapidly and learn to read and write. She is extremely knowledgeable about the stages of child development and uses this knowledge to accurately plan a large range of activities that will ensure children swiftly learn basic skills. Children were observed using a pincer grip and accurately forming single letters, developing fine motor skills through 'dough gym' and developing mastery of initial letter sounds. The most-able children were writing simple words independently and many were in the early stages of reading.
- The excellent teaching of phonics in the early years is helping children to get off to a rapid start and high-quality input from teaching assistants is supporting children in the fast acquisition of basic skills.
- The academy employs a speech and language therapist who works with individuals and groups of children to develop early language skills, very effectively closing the gaps in understanding and communication so that children get the best start. The speech and language therapist shares her expertise throughout the academy, providing training and advice to staff, helping them to provide highly bespoke support for pupils.
- Leaders robustly promote children's good reading habits with parents, inviting parents to change reading books, to borrow 'story sacks' and to engage in reading at home. Inspectors observed a large number of parents coming into Reception class in the morning to take part in phonics, or to read with their children. Parents are highly appreciative of the efforts of staff to make them feel welcome and to involve them in their child's learning.
- Outdoor provision is very well planned and provides children with extensive opportunities to continue their learning. The most-able pupils were observed locating Africa on a map and then acting out the story of *Handa's Surprise*, encouraged by the range of inviting baskets, fruit and costumes. Equal opportunities for boys and girls to play and learn help to develop children's empathy and respect for others. For example, a boy was observed carefully wrapping up and feeding a 'baby'.

- Leaders' commitment to ensuring children learn about healthy living and adopt healthy lifestyles is very impressive. For example, organised by the academy, Reception and Year 1 children attend swimming lessons with their parents. As a result, leaders have observed many benefits for children, including increased confidence and resilience in learning.

School details

Unique reference number	137337
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10003849

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	587
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Haddock
Executive headteacher	Jonathan Moss
Headteacher	Shameem Hussain
Telephone number	01422 345004
Website	www.beechhillschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@beechhillschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	January 2011

Information about this school

- Beech Hill School is twice the size of an average-sized primary school.
- The academy is a stand-alone academy trust.
- The executive headteacher works part time and the headteacher is full time.
- One of the deputy headteachers is a specialist leader of education for teaching and learning. An assistant headteacher is a specialist leader of education for English. Both teachers work in several schools locally to support improvements in teaching.
- Teachers at the academy regularly deliver training and lectures for students on initial teacher training courses.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium is much higher than average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for children who are looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or who have special educational needs is average.
- Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics.
- Beech Hill offers places for two-year-olds.
- Children in the Reception class attend full time. Children in the Nursery class attend part time.

Information about this inspection

- Together with the headteacher, inspectors looked at pupil progress data, information about the performance of teachers, documents relating to behaviour and safety, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 30 parts of lessons, some alongside the deputy headteachers.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, and observed pupils' learning in small groups. They spoke with pupils in lessons, at lunchtime and at playtimes and met with groups of pupils from all classes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, class teachers, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day and during a meeting. There were insufficient responses from parents to consider Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.
- Inspectors took account of online responses returned by members of staff.

Inspection team

Lesley Butcher, Lead Inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ian Clennan	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Heaton	Ofsted Inspector
Janet Keefe	Ofsted Inspector
Brian Stillings	Ofsted Inspector

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