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Mr Russell Bennett  
Principal  
The Beacon School  
Picquets Way  
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Surrey  
SM7 1AG

Dear Mr Bennett

### **Short inspection of The Beacon School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2017 with Frederick Valletta, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in October 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your clear vision, astute leadership and relentless pursuit of improvement have ensured that the points raised at the time of the last inspection have been addressed and strengthened further. As principal, you have created an effective leadership structure where all leaders, managers and teachers are very clear about their roles and responsibilities. The ethos of the school, 'achieving together and leading the way', pervades everything that you do.

You have successfully implemented useful procedures to evaluate the quality of education provided by the school. These have led to your comprehensive self-evaluation and school improvement plan. You have worked tirelessly with your senior leaders, middle leaders and school staff to raise outcomes and improve the quality of teaching and learning. For example, the 'Beacon Ten for Teaching' programme offers a set of behaviours for the most successful lessons.

Pupils behave well and value the support that they receive from staff. Pupils rightly told me that staff are always willing to give of their time. The very large majority of staff said they were proud to work at the school. They agreed with inspectors that the school is well led and managed. A typical response from the staff questionnaires said, 'I am always supported, advice is readily available and I feel I can always ask.'

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve teaching further by raising expectations in lessons and ensuring that teachers ask more searching questions.

High expectations were evidenced in most lessons visited during this inspection and questioning was frequently of a high standard. For example, in a Year 8 geography lesson, the teacher's extensive and probing questions allowed pupils to understand how to make better use of photographic evidence in their work. You recognise, however, that there are further improvements that can be made in teaching and the effectiveness of teachers' feedback so that pupils make consistently strong progress across subjects.

You were also asked to strengthen the impact of subject/phase leaders. Through ongoing training and support, as well as recent new appointments in humanities and languages, subject leadership has been strengthened and is now more effective. One response on the staff questionnaire confirmed, 'I have really benefited from the professional development opportunities that the school has afforded me.' Most staff rightly agree that the school's programme of training and development is well considered and has helped them to improve their practice and pupils' outcomes.

Pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form are now making progress in line with, and often above, their peers with similar starting points nationally. Attainment across all subjects is improving and the gap between boys and girls is narrowing across all years. Lesson observations, checks on pupils' work and the school's assessment information confirm that disadvantaged pupils and the small numbers of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are now doing much better than previously. You are aware that further work is still needed to remove differences but leaders and teachers are more focused on groups and their performance which is tracked regularly. Attendance and punctuality have improved for all identified groups. You are working hard to develop good communication with parents, but you know that this is an area for development.

Governors have a very secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They rigorously challenge leaders on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and other groups and have a secure understanding of the impact of the pupil premium funding.

The school joined the GLF Schools academy trust in September 2016. In the short time since joining they have benefited from the excellent advice and support of the trust and partner schools. This has included challenging reviews and tailored training as well as the opportunity for the school to contribute their strengths to the trust.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of a high quality. Staff receive regular training about how to help keep children safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and social media. Leaders carry out all the required checks on the suitability of staff before appointment. These are carefully recorded on the single central register of recruitment checks.

Staff with additional responsibility for safeguarding are well trained and provide useful and regular information and updates to staff. Leaders work well with external agencies and pursue the best outcomes for pupils including those educated off site. Most parents rightly say that their child feels safe in school. Pupils confirm that there is an adult with whom they can talk if they have any concerns. Pupils appreciate the school's concern for their safety and well-being.

There is a strong culture of vigilance and active support for pupils' health, safety welfare and well-being. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves and others safe. Staff understand well these procedures and practices because they receive regular training and updates. Documentation is detailed and up to date. Governors have undertaken all the necessary safeguarding training. They ensure that safeguarding procedures and practices meet statutory requirements.

### **Inspection findings**

- Evidence from lesson observations, checks on pupils' work and school assessment information confirms that current pupils are making consistently good progress. Boys, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and students in the sixth form are on track for improved performance in the 2017 examinations. This is a result of effective ongoing training, improved teaching, better use of assessment information and a school wide focus on the performance of underachieving groups. External reviews of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have resulted in a greater focus on these pupils. Improved leadership in the sixth form has resulted in better progress. The school is continuing to work effectively with disadvantaged pupils and other groups to diminish differences in their performance when compared with other pupils nationally.
- Overall, teaching is strong across all years and all subjects. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are up to date with examination requirements. Expectations are invariably high. Teachers are aware of pupils' individual requirements and make good use of this knowledge in planning lessons and deciding suitable resources. Well-considered and focused training and development opportunities have ensured that teaching takes greater account of pupils' differences. Individual strengths and weaknesses are known and supported. However, leaders have rightly identified that there is still some work to do to improve the quality of teaching in a minority of subjects and in consistently implementing the school's policy on feedback in the sixth form.
- School leaders, at all levels, have an ambitious vision for the school. Strengths and weaknesses are known and the school is resolutely focused on improving teaching and raising outcomes. This determination is shared by subject leaders whose competence and skills have been strengthened by recent appointments and intensive training. The drive for improvement is shared by staff, pupils and most parents. A few parents expressed minor concerns about communication between them and the school as well as pupils' progress, teaching and bullying. These concerns were not confirmed by inspection evidence. Whole-school development is supported well by governors and the academy trust.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the steps taken to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and other groups are firmly established
- the quality of teaching and feedback continues to improve so that pupils' performance is consistently strong across all subjects over time
- the school continues to develop its partnership with parents through improved communication and emphasising what it does well.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Metcalf  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you and the senior leadership team at the start of the day to discuss the school's self-evaluation, consider improvements made since the last inspection and to agree the key lines of enquiry. Further meetings were held with you as well as senior leaders, middle leaders and other staff. I met with a group of governors and representatives from the academy trust.

Inspectors observed the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in 18 lessons with you and other senior leaders. We reviewed pupils' work across the school and held meetings with pupils as well as speaking informally to them during lessons and around the school.

We looked at the school's website and a range of school documentation, including the 'strategic development plan and self-evaluation' document, teaching files, safeguarding policies and the single central record of recruitment checks. We also looked at the school's attendance, behaviour and exclusions information. Inspectors took account of responses to questionnaires completed by 52 members of staff, 15 pupils and 156 parents as well as accompanying written comments.