

The Beech Academy

Fairholme Drive, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG19 6DX

Inspection dates

23–24 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors are ambitious and forward thinking. They have secured rapid improvements in a short space of time.
- Governors have a considerable set of skills. Their work and the work of the multi-academy trust have brought about key improvements.
- Middle leaders are highly capable. They have an exceptional understanding of the school's strengths and areas of development. They have worked with senior leaders to rapidly improve teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils.
- This school has maintained a highly purposeful and productive relationship with the local authority.
- Teachers' practice develops pupils' understanding through effective questioning. Most teachers have consistently high expectations. However, some teachers do not provide the high level of challenge which would help the most able pupils make more rapid progress.
- Leaders and teachers use assessment information effectively and have a clear understanding of pupils' starting points. As a result, pupils make consistently good progress across almost all year groups. Although improving, rates of progress in mathematics are not as strong as in other subjects.
- All staff have excellent relationships with pupils. As a result, outcomes have improved over time.
- Pupils' behaviour is a key strength of the school. Pupils show great respect towards adults and to one another.
- Staff consistently apply strategies to ensure that pupils behave extremely well. Rewards and sanctions are well known to pupils and are highly valued. Pupils feel and are kept safe.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a key focus of the school's work. Pupils develop a strong sense of what is right and wrong and respect diversity.
- Teaching in the sixth form supports students to gain academic and vocational qualifications. However, in this key stage some students' progress is not as strong as most.
- As a result of effective support, all school leavers enter into employment or education-based training.
- Given the high level of mobility within this provision, leaders and staff pay close attention to transition. Effective support results in students feeling well prepared for the next stages of education.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching and learning further by ensuring that:
 - teachers provide pupils, particularly the most able, with a consistently high level of challenge across the curriculum
 - teachers further develop pupils' ability to apply mathematical skills to solve problems.
- Improve the rate of progress of some students in the sixth form by making sure that:
 - staff make better use of assessment information to establish appropriate targets for students
 - any gaps in learning continue to be addressed.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders and governors at this school are exceptional practitioners. They have established a very clear vision which is shared by the whole school community. Their values of ambition, integrity, inclusivity, resilience and endeavour underpin all that they do.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have developed highly effective school improvement practices. Their strong systems have enabled the school to move forward rapidly since becoming an academy.
- Leaders and governors have established rigorous procedures to develop the whole provision. Checks made on staff performance are effectively used to develop teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders do not shy away from challenging underperformance. They have high expectations for staff and pupils.
- Leaders provide staff with very effective support. High-quality staff training and in-class support ensures that teachers have the knowledge and skills to improve pupils' learning and progress.
- Staff share their well-developed skills within the school, with the multi-academy trust and across the local authority to provide effective support for pupils with additional needs.
- Senior leaders have very effectively developed the work of other leaders in the school. They carefully identify the skills of their workforce and have developed several highly effective middle leaders. Middle leaders have created a tailor-made curriculum to respond to pupils' needs.
- The school's curriculum is aspirational, broad and balanced. Leaders have designed a programme of study that provides pupils with a wide range of skills. These skills encompass both the academic and pastoral needs of the pupils. For example, in food technology, leaders have designed a series of lessons that capture pupils' imagination and interests. Pupils prepare a wide range of recipes, including lasagne, salads and cakes. Pupils used their products to raise funds for a charity event in the autumn term. Every pupil attends a lunchtime club. Clubs are specifically designed to promote pupils' independence and leadership skills.
- The pupil premium funding is used very effectively to support those pupils who are disadvantaged. Leaders, governors and staff have a precise understanding of any barriers pupils face. This understanding is used very aptly to build specific programmes of support which includes a weekly opportunity to develop swimming skills, a bespoke school uniform to promote inclusion, and the appointment of additional adult support with particular skills and expertise.
- The Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding is used to establish additional booster sessions, which enable pupils to close any gaps in their learning. Evidence in pupils' books shows that this support secures strong rates of progress for pupils.
- Additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is

used well to enhance provision at the Westfield site. This additional resource offers a further level of support to pupils with specific needs. Within this resource, pupils have access to learning rooms that are customised to their needs. The impact of this aspect of the school's provision has considerably improved pupils' attendance and the quality of their learning.

- The local authority and the multi-academy trust have worked very effectively with leaders to support the school's improvement. Both partners have supported the school to embed rigorous systems to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Staff training on how to use assessment effectively has been an established priority for all schools within the multi-academy trust.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a wide range of skills that have contributed to the overall development of the school.
- Governors work collaboratively with school leaders to focus on improving outcomes for pupils; they hold leaders rigorously to account.
- Governors engage with parents to gather and respond to parents' views.
- Governors ensure that staff receive the support that they require and monitor the impact that this has on pupils' learning, progress and attendance.
- Governors pay close attention to their statutory duties, including those relating to safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding procedures are robust. The school's single central record is compliant and its contents are regularly monitored by the multi-academy trust and governors.
- Staff with whom inspectors spoke have received appropriate levels of training and are left in no doubt regarding the action to take if they have a concern.
- Pupils state they feel safe and identified staff they could talk to if they had a worry.
- The school's child protection records show they work effectively with parents and other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe.
- The curriculum is designed to help pupils develop their understanding of how to stay safe. In a sixth-form lesson about drug awareness, the teacher effectively supported students to understand the effects of performance-enhancing drugs on athletes.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers use searching questions to secure and extend pupils' understanding. This effective questioning has a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- The language used by teachers is adapted to meet the individual needs of pupils. A

particular strength is the way in which teachers communicate with those pupils with autistic spectrum condition (ASC) by using a range of visual and verbal cues to convey meaning.

- Teachers develop positive relationships with pupils by keying into their interests. For example, in a key stage 4 English lesson, the teacher skilfully used allegiances to a football club as a way to develop pupils' understanding of opinions.
- Lessons are carefully planned to meet pupils' needs. Teachers take time to ensure that activities are meaningful and reflect the different starting points.
- Teachers promote well pupils' basic skills in spelling, grammar and punctuation. This ensures that pupils are able to extend and develop their use of vocabulary, orally and written.
- Pupils' books and work on display show good progress. Teachers' development of pupils' writing is a strength. At the start of the year, some pupils' writing was limited to simple sentences and bullet points. However, as a result of effective teaching, pupils' sentences are now more complex and sophisticated.
- Teachers use assessment information to carefully plan the next steps for pupils. Where teachers identify underachievement, additional support is quickly established. Some pupils arrive at The Beech with gaps in their learning. Teachers are quick to identify these gaps and support pupils to catch up quickly.
- Some teachers do not provide pupils with a consistent level of challenge. On occasions, these pupils are not provided with learning that adequately stretches or offers additional challenge when planned tasks are completed.
- Teachers ensure that pupils make progress in mathematics. However, in this subject, pupils' progress is a bit slower than in other subjects because teachers do not promote pupils' problem-solving skills effectively enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are very confident, self-assured and resilient. Pupils are encouraged to become self-reliant in their learning. They demonstrate immense pride in their school.
- In meetings with inspectors, pupils were articulate and forthcoming. They demonstrated a strong awareness of British values. In one discussion about different faiths and diversity, one pupil said, 'You accept people for what they are; it doesn't matter if you are different; we are all human.'
- Enrichment activities provide pupils with opportunities to develop their empathy towards others, such as visits to a Holocaust centre, and fund-raising events for people who suffer with illness.
- Pupils benefit from a special programme to support their personal development. In these effective sessions, pupils learn about drug awareness, different religions and how

to eat healthily.

- Pupils were able to show an excellent understanding of the diversity of modern Britain by creating foods from other cultures, such as pizza and Rogan josh, and researching the festivals of Diwali and Hannukah.
- Pupils did not raise any concerns about bullying during the inspection. Those pupils who spoke with inspectors said they were confident in the staff's ability to deal with concerns.
- The breadth and balance of the curriculum are also strengths of the provision. Inspectors observed pupils' developing skills to promote their emotional well-being
- Older pupils show considerable empathy towards younger pupils and act as positive role models. Pupils in key stage 4 have opportunities to act as mentors for younger pupils by listening to their worries and encouraging them to improve their own attendance.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Given pupils' specific needs and starting points, their conduct and self-discipline is highly developed.
- As a result of highly effective support, pupils are able to manage their feelings and emotions exceptionally well.
- Any low-level disruption is dealt with skilfully by staff. Negative behaviour is quickly addressed and does not have a detrimental impact on any pupils' learning.
- The school environment is extremely well managed and orderly. The premises and resources are maintained to a high standard. Corridors and playgrounds are litter free and it is clearly obvious that the community takes pride in their school.
- Inspectors visited pupils in the alternative provision. The standards of personal, development and welfare evident in the school are replicated off site. Inspectors found the alternative provision sampled to be exceptionally safe and secure for pupils. Rigorous checking systems are in place to ensure that pupils' safety and well-being are high on the agenda.
- Historically, pupils' attendance has been well below average and the rate of persistent absence above average. However, this is as a result of several unique and exceptional circumstances for pupils. Given the small size of the school, one pupil's attendance can have a significant impact on whole-school attendance. Taking into account several case studies, the attendance of the vast majority of pupils is improving and currently is above the national average.
- Inspectors found that all systems to promote behaviour met statutory requirements.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- All pupils that attend The Beech have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' outcomes, their emotional well-being and their wider personal development are good due to the broad curriculum offered and effective teaching.

- Outcomes in key stages 3 and 4 are good. Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop their skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects. Students' books demonstrate that outcomes are improving in the sixth form. However, the school's own assessment information shows that progress in the sixth form is not yet as rapid as that found in other key stages.
- While improving, progress in mathematics is not as strong as other areas of the curriculum. The impact of teaching and learning has not been as robust. Leaders and governors recognise this relative underachievement and are responding appropriately; for example, additional mathematics classes have been established after school for some pupils.
- Pupils, particularly the most able, study for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. As a result of high expectations, many pupils are supported well to gain academic and vocational qualifications.
- Inspectors observed strong achievement, particularly in relation to vocational studies, such as photography and cookery.
- Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress in all aspects of the curriculum, considering their different starting points. Additional support, including extra classes after school, enables pupils to catch up and rapidly develop their knowledge and skills.
- The organisation of the specialist and alternative provision secures good progress for pupils over time. These aspects of the wider provision successfully address the specific personal needs of pupils. Beyond academic outcomes, pupils are supported to gain essential life skills and become active members of society. Overall, pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education, training or employment.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Students have the opportunity to participate in work experience programmes, such as 'The Beech Big Build'. This initiative involves students working on a housing project with a local building firm. As a result of students attending this project, they gained valuable workplace and life skills.
- Leaders devise timetables to allow students to visit local job centres and to travel independently.
- Students grow their own vegetables at The Beech and then sell these at market stalls during team enterprise events. Events such as these allow students to interact with the local community, incorporating their financial and communication skills.
- Students follow a variety of courses, including functional skills, GCSE and vocational courses. As a result of this, students are able to gain a wide range of qualifications to prepare them for future employment.
- Leaders effectively track leavers and current data shows that students are either remaining in further education or sustaining employment.
- Teachers in the sixth form set clear objectives and pupils are encouraged to discuss activities. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and explain concepts confidently.

- Staff use established reward systems to foster the interest of students. This contributes to the good relationships observed between staff and students.
- Students have developed effective strategies to manage their own behaviours. As a result of effective support, students in the sixth form are confident and able to express themselves in a positive way.
- A small number of students in the sixth form are not making as good progress as others. Some have gaps in their learning. Leaders recognise that these gaps in students' learning must continue be addressed. Leaders have appointed a new leader for the sixth form to secure further improvements in this area.

School details

Unique reference number	140854
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	10031134

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	19
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Penny Camidge
Headteacher	Adrian O'Malley
Telephone number	01623 626008
Website	www.beech.evolutrust.org
Email address	office@beech.evolutrust.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- In 2014, the school converted to academy status, as part of the Evolve Multi-academy Trust.
- The headteacher took up his current post in May 2016; prior to this, he was head of

school from September 2013.

- Beech Academy is a secondary special school for pupils who have a diagnosis of ASC and/or moderate learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities or an education, health and care plan.
- A very small group of pupils attend alternative provision at one of the following providers: REAL Education, Chesterfield Community Farm, and CAST.
- Governors are responsible for an off-site unit, Westfield, which supports pupils with specific anxiety related needs.
- Approximately two thirds of pupils are disadvantaged. This is more than twice the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is very low and there are no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who arrive or leave at different times of the school year is high.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a wide range of lessons or part lessons, some of which were carried out jointly with leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher and chief executive officer of the trust at the start of the inspection to share key lines of enquiry and discuss the overall effectiveness of the school.
- An inspector observed pupils arriving at school via transport provided by the local authority.
- Inspection activities included: meetings with leaders with responsibility for curriculum, behaviour, assessment and safeguarding; book analysis; telephone conversations with parents; a visit to an alternative provider; and a visit to the schools off-site provision, Westfield.
- The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and also with a representative from the multi-academy trust.
- The lead inspector met with the local authority education improvement partner.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including: minutes of governing body meetings; the single central record; external reviews for improvement and safeguarding; policies for safeguarding, behaviour management, medications and curriculum; child protection records; attendance information; assessment information and monitoring files.
- Inspectors took account of 17 responses from the staff survey. There were no responses from pupils and two responses from parents on Ofsted’s free-text service. There were insufficient responses on Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, to generate a report.

Inspection team

Kim Ellis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Robert Roalfe

Ofsted Inspector

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