

# Beecroft Academy

Westfield Road, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 1DW

## Inspection dates

23–24 May 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good because they provide robust challenge and effective training to all staff. The monitoring and management of teachers' performance holds them to account for the quality of their work.
- Children achieve well in Reception. Innovative and inspired teaching has resulted in increasing numbers of children making good progress from their individual starting points. Children are well prepared for the Year 1 curriculum.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about learning. They behave well in lessons and are supportive of each other's learning.
- Pupils feel safe at school and are confident that any issues, such as bullying, are addressed effectively by staff.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are currently making good progress.
- Leaders provide effective support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities enabling them to make good progress in most areas of the curriculum.
- The curriculum prepares pupils for life in 21st-century Britain. Pupils learn about the key concepts of democracy, freedom of speech and tolerance. They develop very high levels of empathy for the well-being of their peers.
- The curriculum is broad and well developed, ensuring that pupils learn effectively about a range of subjects such as French, music, design technology and history.
- Teachers develop pupils' language skills, including subject-specific vocabulary, very effectively in all areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress in reading because it is not taught well in all classes.
- Some teachers do not implement the school's policy on providing feedback to pupils and so do not support them to make good progress.
- In some key stage 2 classes, the tasks teachers set for pupils do not support or challenge them sufficiently.
- Although overall attendance is improving, disadvantaged pupils' attendance lags behind that of others.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - ensuring that learning tasks set in key stage 2 classes consolidate and extend pupils' understanding, skills and knowledge
  - ensuring that a systematic approach to the teaching of reading is in place across the school.
- Continue to improve the attendance of all pupils, including that of disadvantaged pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The current headteacher is relatively new to post but has worked hard to establish a very effective leadership team. Leaders have accurately identified the priorities the school needs to address to continue to improve outcomes for all pupils, they rigorously monitor and support teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, staff have a better understanding of the needs of all groups of pupils and are meeting them effectively.
- Senior and middle leaders decide how to make improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment skilfully. They have involved teachers in continually tracking and monitoring pupils' achievements, particularly those of disadvantaged pupils. Most teachers use this information to organise learning activities and so improve pupils' progress. However, when teachers do not use this information well enough pupils do not develop their understanding well enough.
- Leaders use resources such as additional funding for disadvantaged pupils well to improve progress across the curriculum. Leaders frequently review the impact of this support and make adjustments where necessary. As a result, the strategies that teachers use effectively support pupils' progress. For example, one-to-one reading, phonics support and specialist mathematics support has had marked success in improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- The management of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. Pupils' needs are assessed accurately, and funding allocated to meet them. Leaders meet regularly to evaluate the impact of specific approaches with staff, pupils and parents. Parents are actively engaged in meeting the individual needs of these children.
- Leaders spend the primary sports premium funding effectively. A specialist physical education (PE) teacher teaches pupils a range of sports such as tennis, rounders and football. Girls and boys have equal access to a range of sports and can pursue them in greater depth in after-school clubs. Additionally, the specialist teacher provides training to the staff at the school to improve their understanding, skills and knowledge.
- Pupils learn through a broad and balanced curriculum. They learn about different subjects within specific themes. For example, pupils learning about Mexico studied the geography of the area and made volcanoes which they 'erupted' in the school playground. Pupils in key stage 2 develop strong understanding of French pronunciation and enjoy sounding out key French words and phrases.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strength of the school. Leaders and staff support the development of pupils' emotional resilience and self-confidence as learners well. As a consequence, pupils are able to overcome the barriers to their learning swiftly.
- Senior leaders have prioritised the development of subject leadership. They support subject leaders well through the provision of appropriate training, which is shared effectively with all staff. For example, the leadership of phonics has ensured that all staff are trained to teach key phonics skills, resulting in improved progress for pupils. Leadership of mathematics and English at both key stage 1 and key stage 2 is robust.

- The leaders of English and mathematics address emerging issues and ensure that staff are supported. For example, having identified specific issues with reading, key stage 1 and key stage 2 English leads supported staff to effectively develop their teaching approaches. It is, however, too early to measure the impact of this strategy.
- Pupils value the opportunities they have to engage in wider experiences such as visits to the local farm and overnight residential visits. Reception children spoke enthusiastically to inspectors about their recent visit to the farm and how it had informed their learning for the day.
- Leaders have established robust approaches to assessment. All staff receive regular training in how to analyse the gaps in pupils' learning and refine their planning and teaching. However, some teachers are not using this information to ensure that all groups of pupils are consolidating their learning and closing any gaps they may have in their knowledge and skills.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governing body knows the school well and provides effective support and challenge in equal measure. Although some governors are relatively new to the governing body, they bring a breadth of experience and knowledge. As a consequence, they are able to ask pertinent and challenging questions.
- Regular meetings with leaders and staff, visits to the school and discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of the school ensure that governors are well informed. For example, governors have developed a strong understanding of the challenges the school has faced in transitioning from a lower school to a primary school. As a consequence, they ask pertinent questions about the level of challenge posed at key stage 2 to ensure that pupils achieve well.
- The structure of the governing body is effective in enabling governors to gain a detailed understanding of specific aspects of the school's work, which are shared at governing body meetings. For example, governors have focused on the demands of writing at key stage 1 and key stage 2 to support and challenge leaders at all levels.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders of safeguarding have established a thorough and robust approach to keeping all pupils safe. Staff know pupils very well and are alert to any signs that may suggest that they are at risk of harm. Leaders engage with external agencies when appropriate and strive to involve parents at every stage of an assessment to ensure that any needs of pupils are met.
- Safeguarding leads have established an effective system of internal and external referrals and they respond to these in a timely and informed fashion.
- Health and safety risk assessment systems are equally robust. For example, the log of incidents requiring first aid in the playground is meticulously updated and additional staff are on call both in the school building and playground to attend to any issue if needed.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers forge very positive relationships with their pupils. Many pupils told the inspectors that they enjoyed learning because they 'liked their teachers'. As a consequence, pupils are enthusiastic about making progress in lessons.
- The teaching of phonics is robust. It is embedded well throughout early years and key stage 1. Pupils enjoy reading and are able to read new words using their skills well.
- The teaching of writing is a strength of the school. Having recognised that pupils' writing progress had weakened, leaders and staff made changes to how writing is taught. As a consequence, pupils have many opportunities to write at length. Pupils are able to talk about the words they use and the impact they might have on a reader. For example, an inspector observed Year 1 pupils using imperatives in their writing for effect. Teachers are aware of the difficulties that some pupils experience with handwriting and are careful to support them so that they can still enjoy the process of writing.
- The teaching of mathematics across the school is robust. Teachers ensure that pupils make swift progress through a range of effective strategies such as pictorial explanations before moving to written problems.
- Teachers in Reception, key stage 1 and key stage 2 focus intently on developing pupils' language skills. Subject-specific vocabulary and increasingly sophisticated sentence structures are shared throughout lessons. This helps pupils to develop their understanding and learn well in different subjects.
- Teachers maintain up-to-date knowledge and skills in each area of the curriculum due to subject leader support. For example, the science leader conducted a recent review. As a result of this analysis, leaders allocated specific curriculum time to the subject and provided support regarding the teaching of key science skills.
- In Years 5 and 6, the focus on studying texts is strong and informs pupils' writing skills. Pupils enjoy whole-class reading of texts such as 'There's a boy in the girls' bathroom' by Louis Sachar. Pupils are able to write about the ideas and characters in the story with understanding and knowledge.
- Teachers know their pupils well. Most teachers at key stage 1 use the information about their pupils' progress to inform planning for new learning well.
- At key stage 2, some teachers move learning on before ensuring that all pupils are secure in their understanding. As a result, some pupils struggle to access new, more-challenging learning.
- In lower key stage 2 and key stage 1, the teaching of reading is inconsistent. Pupils do not develop their reading skills as strongly as their writing skills. They do not have sufficient opportunities to discuss ideas and characters in texts.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Pupils feel safe and well looked after. They are confident that any issues concerning their emotional or physical well-being would be addressed effectively and swiftly by school staff.
- Pupils are informed about the importance of staying safe on the internet. Many pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 told an inspector that they understood the importance of not sharing their name or responding in any way if they were contacted while playing games online.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunities to play at break and lunchtime in the very well supervised areas around the school. Pupils play well together, they take turns and are respectful of each other's wishes.
- Pupils display high levels of empathy towards each other. They are supportive of each other during lessons and show kindness and tolerance. The school's focus on developing pupils' values has clearly had a positive impact. For example, this month's 'value' is 'responsibility' and pupils demonstrate high levels of responsibility for their work.
- Pupils develop their understanding of themselves as citizens through engaging with the school council. Pupils put forward suggestions to their class representatives, who bring their suggestions for improvements to the school council meetings chaired by the headteacher. For example, Year 1 requested and were provided with a 'Stone Age' menu for pupils to choose from in the dining hall.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and throughout the school. They listen attentively and follow instructions well. They follow school procedures, ensuring a positive learning climate.
- Leaders have effectively addressed poor behaviour in and out of the classroom. They have introduced clear systems which are reviewed regularly and monitored to ensure uniformity of approach. Consequently, pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is good. Leaders regularly review behaviour incidents to ensure that pupils receive the best possible support.
- Overall attendance has improved in line with the national average but the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved only very slightly. The school follows robust processes to encourage full attendance, such as rewards for whole classes and individuals. The school has a robust policy of calling parents when their children are absent from school and of monitoring the impact of attendance on pupils' achievements.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- In 2016 the attainment of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who had reached a good level of development at the end of the early years was low in reading, writing and mathematics. Previously, in 2015, more pupils reached age-related expectations at the end of Year 2. Leaders have been quick to respond to the issues that emerged in 2016. They have supported teachers to meet pupils' learning needs in lessons better. They

have also supported teachers to identify the barriers to learning faced by disadvantaged pupils. As a result, progress at key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics is improving strongly.

- Disadvantaged pupils' achievements in both key stage 1 and 2 are improving across the curriculum because leaders have successfully reviewed the support they receive. While differences are diminishing, their attainment remains below that of other pupils nationally.
- The progress of pupils over time at key stage 2 is more robust in Year 6. Having transformed from a lower school to a full primary in 2015, the first cohort of Year 6 pupils will complete key stage 2 in 2017. Current assessment information demonstrates sound progress and attainment at key stage 2. The school's very specific focus on involving staff in the tracking and monitoring of pupil progress and attainment has ensured that gaps in learning are readily identified and effective intervention is provided.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics. A specialist intervention teacher ensures that pupils identified as struggling with specific areas of mathematics make accelerated progress.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils at key stage 1 and key stage 2, are currently making accelerated progress from their starting points.
- Progress in writing has improved across the key stages. Leaders and staff have identified the issue of handwriting as a potential obstacle to pupils' writing development but the breadth of writing opportunities across subjects of the curriculum is helping to support them enjoy their learning.
- Current reading progress at both key stages is improving. However, there are inconsistencies in the amount of curriculum time allocated to writing at the expense of reading, and in how well pupils' skills in reading are systematically taught. In Years 5 and 6, there are strong examples of the effective teaching of reading but this is not evident in every class or every year group.
- Effective teaching of phonics is supporting pupils to make good progress in developing reading skills. The intense support given to disadvantaged pupils resulted in marked improvements in their understanding and in the proportion reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check. Similar approaches are now being used across key stage 2 to help pupils catch up.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are given very focused support which is reviewed regularly. They are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In addition, well-trained staff provide excellent support to strengthen the self-esteem of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and to develop their attitudes towards learning.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- Leadership of the early years is strong. Assessment and tracking of children's achievements is robust, enabling staff to effectively build on and develop children's skills, understanding and knowledge.

- Children are making good progress from typically low starting points. The needs of all children are carefully tracked and personalised support is provided where appropriate, for example one-to-one reading and additional support with phonics.
- Leaders and teachers are fully aware of the need to focus on children's language skills. As a result, many children become more confident speakers as they learn. For example, the inspector observed a teacher reminding a child to speak in full sentences rather than one-word answers.
- Teachers plan a range of well-considered activities designed to extend children's understanding of the world they live in. For example, the children had recently visited a local farm and were enjoying a wide range of activities which extended their understanding by using and building on this experience.
- The children are extremely enthusiastic about learning. They embrace the range of activities on offer with gusto. Children maintain their concentration for impressive lengths of time. They discuss their understanding with each other and support each other's learning well.
- The outside space is carefully structured to develop children's key skills, in particular their physical movement. As a consequence, children learn to manipulate pens and pencils and develop their early writing skills.
- Staff have developed effective relationships with parents and many parents respond enthusiastically to the opportunities they have to understand and contribute to their child's ongoing assessments. For example, they visit the setting and enjoy learning activities together on 'Family Fun Thursday'.
- Leaders carry out daily checks on the safety of the early years provision to ensure that all children are safe.



## School details

Unique reference number	140276
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10031413

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 alternative provision
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	375
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Fowler
Headteacher	James Hughes
Telephone number	01582 663486
Website	<a href="http://www.beecroftacademy.co.uk">www.beecroftacademy.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@beecroftacademy.co.uk">office@beecroftacademy.co.uk</a>
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.
- Beecroft Academy became a single academy primary in 2015
- Beecroft Academy is part of the Acorns Teaching School Alliance.
- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is above average.

- The proportion of pupils who receive support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans is below average.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in Reception, key stage 1 and key stage 2 jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher; the deputy headteacher; the leaders of mathematics, English, science, early years, special educational needs and/or disabilities and leaders of religious education, geography, phonics and PE; five governors; the school improvement partner; pupils and teachers.
- Pupils' books and records of their progress were scrutinised.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and discussed their reading experiences with them.
- Account was taken of parent responses to inspectors.
- A range of documentation was examined, including the school's development plan and analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, safeguarding policies and records, and records made by leaders on the quality of teaching.

## Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Caroline Dawes	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Kissane	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Watson	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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