School report

Beacon Hill Community School

Market Square, Aspatria, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 3EZ

Inspection dates	27–28 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	**Requires improvement**
Effectiveness of leadership and management	**Good**
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	**Requires improvement**
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	**Good**
Outcomes for pupils	**Requires improvement**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching is not good and pupils' progress is not as rapid as it could be in all subjects. Some teaching does not inspire pupils because it requires too little of them.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough in some subjects, and their assessments of pupils' work are overgenerous.
- The most able pupils are not taught in sufficient depth to enable them to make good progress and achieve high grades in examinations in all subjects.
- Pupils have limited chances to develop their thinking and speaking skills in lessons. They lack opportunities to take responsibility and use their initiative.
- Pupils do not have examples of high-quality work to support achievement at the highest grades.
- Subject leaders are developing their skills by working with colleagues from other schools. However, there is sometimes too little expected of teaching and pupils' progress, which is reflected in pupils' outcomes.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders and governors have vision and ambition for the school. The executive headteacher is inspiring improvements to teaching and learning and has developed productive links with other schools.
- The deputy headteacher and other leaders ensure that new initiatives are implemented successfully. The new governing body supports and challenges leaders knowledgeably. Staff are committed to raising pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' outcomes are improving as a result of clear leadership and improvements to teaching, especially in English and mathematics. Leaders are tackling the aspects that require further improvement rigorously.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with low prior attainment make good progress. They are supported well in lessons and small groups.
- Effective careers education, advice, information and guidance support pupils to pursue further education, gain employment or participate in training after they leave school.
- There are extremely rigorous procedures to safeguard pupils and ensure their welfare. Pupils say that they feel safe and cared for well. The support for vulnerable pupils is exceptional.
- Pupils' behaviour is consistently good in lessons and around the school. They are respectful and try their best.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning, quicken pupils' progress and raise their attainment in examinations by:
  - ensuring that teachers in all subjects have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and of what pupils need to be able to do to reach the highest grades
  - ensuring that teaching is sufficiently challenging to deepen the learning of the most able pupils in all subjects
  - developing pupils' thinking skills by giving them opportunities to solve problems, investigate and reason
  - developing pupils' oral skills by giving them more opportunities to talk about their learning, debate issues and give their views
  - working with partner schools to provide pupils with inspiring, high-quality examples of work.
- Further develop the skills of subject leaders by:
  - working with subject leaders in partner schools to share best practice and mediate assessment of pupils' work.
- Give pupils more opportunities to contribute their ideas and develop their leadership skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good

- The senior leadership team provide clear direction founded on a strong moral purpose to raise pupils' achievement and ensure that they are well prepared for the next steps in their education or employment. The appointment of the executive headteacher has been key in driving improvement and developing productive links with other schools. She is supported ably by the deputy headteacher, who oversees the successful running of the school.
- Staff have welcomed the increased accountability and higher expectations of leaders. They work hard to create a supportive atmosphere where pupils feel at ease, grow in confidence and, increasingly, are achieving well. The vast majority of staff who made their views known feel highly motivated. 'There is always a lot to do, and high expectations, but also a sense of fun' and 'The students are the focus but staff are looked after in a caring and supportive environment' are typical of their comments.
- In this small school, where most staff have a leadership role, responsibility is delegated effectively to make the best use of teachers' skills. Pastoral leaders have good levels of expertise to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. The coordinator of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is knowledgeable and sustains effective provision for pupils who need support. Subject leaders ensure that policies are implemented successfully and check that new initiatives are having the intended impact. There is still variability, however, in subject leaders' expectations for the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, which is reflected in pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders' checks on teaching and learning accurately identify strengths and the aspects that require improvement. School improvement planning is focused on the right priorities as a result. Leaders are aware that teaching is not consistently good in all subjects and progress is not as rapid as it should be for the most able pupils. They are monitoring progress and pursuing improvement rigorously.
- The thorough systems to manage the performance of teachers set high expectations for pupils' learning. The more rigorous approaches to curriculum planning, assessment and setting targets for pupils' achievement are raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Training and professional development is planned with care to make sure that staff develop their skills and contribute to the priorities for whole-school improvement.
- Leaders have tackled the weakest aspects in teaching and are taking effective action to ensure that the best practice is developed. Actions taken so far have had a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. The 2017 GCSE examination results were much improved from the low results of 2016. Pupils across the school make better progress because leaders use the information from the pupils' progress tracking to ensure that support is put in place if pupils' progress falls behind expectations.
- Partnership working is a strength. Leaders have formed productive partnerships with local schools to develop the skills of middle leaders and improve teaching and learning. The school's active role in the 'Getting Better Together' partnership of schools in West Cumbria supports further development. The links with primary schools have improved

transition procedures and ensured that pupils get off to a good start in Year 7.

- The school draws on external support and guidance effectively. Leaders have used external reviews of governance, safeguarding and teaching and learning to inform their monitoring and planning for improvement. The local authority has provided good support, for example by brokering the collaboration with Solway Technology College and through helpful advisory support.
- The curriculum is planned carefully to meet pupils' learning needs and raise their aspirations. The partnership with Solway Technology College has broadened pupils' choice, for example by enabling them to study for geography and history GCSEs at Solway. The collaborative assessments of pupils' work have informed curriculum planning and raised teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve in English and mathematics. The focus on employability skills meets pupils' needs and ensures that they are prepared well for their next steps. Typically, all pupils go into and sustain further education, employment or training on leaving school.
- The many extra-curricular opportunities support pupils' learning considerably. Lunchtime and after-school clubs in French, various sports, performing arts, scientific investigation and 'Lego league' are well attended. Pupils are very positive about the homework-support clubs, where they can seek personalised help. The 'Bike Club' offers pupils a chance to develop their fitness as well as visiting new places, for example in the ride from Rotterdam to Dunkirk.
- Leaders ensure that additional funding is used to minimise barriers for eligible pupils. They meticulously identify barriers to learning and ensure that pupils receive additional help to minimise them. The pupil premium is used effectively to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, so it is as good as or better than other pupils in school. However, their achievement is still below that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used carefully to ensure that they make good progress. Pupils' detailed 'passports', which identify barriers and successful support strategies, ensure that they get the help they need to achieve well. The Year 7 catch-up premium is minimal but is used to support learning in literacy and mathematics effectively.
- Pupils gain a good understanding of British values and global issues in personal development lessons and assemblies. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted in many subjects. Pupils' understanding of different cultures and faiths is extended further in themed days and through trips to more diverse communities in Britain and abroad. Such activities prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Their social skills are not developed as well as they could be, however, as pupils have limited opportunity to take responsibility and use their initiative.
- Parents who responded to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, were unanimously positive about all aspects of the school. They stated, for example, 'The school does a fantastic job preparing students for the outside world. New ties with Solway school have improved the school and have meant that pupils now benefit from a much wider choice of GCSE options whilst still enjoying the benefits of a smaller school.' 'I am extremely happy with how this school is led and in particular with the new head and deputy head who I feel listen and respond to any concerns raised.' Inspection findings endorse these positive views from parents.

Governance of the school

- The entirely new governing body has a range of skills, enabling them to support and challenge leaders successfully. They seek out and check the accuracy of information rigorously, making good use of external reviews.
- Governors have benefited from a review of governance, including a full analysis of pupils' progress. Consequently, they have a good understanding of data and of the relative strengths and weakness in teaching and learning. They check carefully the school's progress with improvement plans, for example asking questions about the progress of the most able pupils.
- Governors have detailed knowledge of the local community and successfully support the school's engagement with local employers. They have plans to engage with parents more widely in order to raise the aspirations of pupils.
- Governors have stabilised the school's finances with support from the school's new business manager. They are aware of how decisions are made about teachers' salaries and manage the performance of the headteacher appropriately, in liaison with the partner school, Solway Technology College. Governors ensure that additional funding is used to raise the achievement and ensure the well-being of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There are extremely rigorous procedures to safeguard pupils, led by the knowledgeable and highly effective pastoral team. All staff have completed relevant training in safeguarding, child protection, first aid and the 'Prevent' duty. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns; they are alert to risks and vigilant in their care for pupils. Records of any safeguarding concerns are thorough and followed through assiduously.
- The support for vulnerable pupils is exceptional. Staff work together and with external agencies if necessary, to help pupils overcome challenges, stay safe and grow in self-esteem. They ensure that parents are well informed and receive appropriate support.
- All policies, records and procedures to ensure the safe recruitment of staff are fit for purpose and meet requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment — Requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good, so pupils make uneven progress. However, there are strengths in teaching that provide a firm foundation for further improvement.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils need to do to attain their target grades vary between subjects. Expectations are higher in English and mathematics, where teachers have moderated pupils' work with other schools and have good knowledge of the new examination specifications. In other subjects, assessments of pupils' work are sometimes overgenerous.
- Teaching is not pitched at a sufficiently challenging level to consistently deepen the

learning of the most able pupils. There are pockets of good practice where the most able pupils are challenged, for example in English and mathematics. However, there is a lack of high-quality pupils' work in some subjects, meaning that pupils do not have examples to inspire them. Pupils with higher target grades are too often provided with the same work as others with lower target grades.

- Some teaching does not inspire pupils because it requires them to give minimal effort and concentration. Pupils have limited opportunities to solve problems, investigate and actively drive their own learning. They are not used to speaking about their learning so their oral and thinking skills are not developed as well as they could be.
- A key strength in all teaching is the positive relationships that teachers nurture to help pupils feel confident in their ability. Pupils say that they feel safe in lessons and know that they can have a go without feeling a failure. In art, pupils gained confidence and developed their skills following personalised support from the teacher.
- Teachers know the pupils extremely well and in the words of one parent, they 'show a genuine interest in them and provide many enrichment opportunities. Staff often use their knowledge of pupils' interests to devise topics and tasks that will provide a higher level of engagement'.
- Teachers have sound subject knowledge; they impart their knowledge effectively and give clear explanations of new learning. In netball, for example, pupils gained new skills following clear explanation and exemplification from the teacher. Much teaching is supported by good-quality questioning, although this can be variable in the extent to which it deepens learning.
- The effective marking policy is used consistently and with increasing success across the school. Pupils find teachers' feedback helpful and appreciate the opportunities they have to improve their work. Pupils' personalised targets are ambitious and helping to raise expectations of what pupils could achieve.
- Pupils' literacy, reading and mathematical skills are promoted well in different subjects and in the school's 'structured intervention' sessions every morning. The sessions that have just been introduced during morning registration are well planned and effectively support pupils to develop their key skills.
- Interventions to support pupils who have low prior attainment are very successful. The reading programmes raise pupils' reading age and for many pupils have promoted a love of reading. Support for pupils in literacy and mathematics has had a positive impact across the curriculum.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are taught very effectively in small groups, and supported well in lessons. Their detailed 'passports' analyse barriers to learning and provide teachers with effective strategies to support their learning.
- Teachers are welcoming of the clear guidance and plans to improve teaching. There are appropriate plans to extend links with Solway Technology College and Keswick School to support teachers in all subjects to check their assessments of pupils' work together.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare — Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' personal development and self-esteem are promoted successfully in lessons and through teachers' supportive relationships. Pupils are kind to each other and feel secure and well cared for by their teachers. For some pupils, who have had a stressful time in other schools, this is a key factor in their growing confidence and pride in their achievements.
- Pupils say bullying is rare in their school. They know that name-calling, including that associated with homophobic or racist views, can cause stress and do their best to ensure that it does not happen. On the very rare occasion there has been an incident, pupils feel adults are prompt and fair in dealing with it. School records affirm their views.
- Pupils who made their views known say that they feel safe and cared for in school. They say that they can turn to adults, who are good at listening, with any concerns about their physical or emotional well-being. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online and in the community. Visitors to the school, such as the police personnel, help pupils develop a deeper understanding of risks to their health and safety. They are aware of risks of radicalisation associated with extremist groups.
- Parents who responded to Parent View were all extremely positive about the care provided by the school, stating for example, 'I feel this school ensures my child feels supported, challenged and safe' and 'Staff are extremely approachable and helpful if I ever have any queries or concerns.'
- Careers education, information, advice and guidance is a strength. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about higher and further education options through well-organised career events, in and out of school. The focus on employability skills in the curriculum and interesting work-experience placements help pupils to develop the skills needed to sustain further education or work. In 2017, all pupils who left Year 11 sustained participation in further education, employment or training.
- Pupils have limited opportunities to take positions of responsibility or use their initiative to support innovation in school. In some subjects, their opportunities to reflect on their learning or articulate what helps them to learn are limited. Their speaking and leadership skills are consequently not developed as well as they could be.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Teachers follow the school's behaviour policy consistently, so pupils know that any unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with promptly and fairly. Pupils uphold the behaviour code because they know they are treated fairly. In the words of one pupil, 'teachers just want to help you do your best and keep you safe'. Several pupils said that the school's approach has helped them improve their behaviour.
- Pupils want to do well and they try their best in lessons. Many of them take advantage

of homework-support clubs and other activities after school to deepen and extend their learning.

- Pupils are cooperative and attentive in lessons. They show enthusiasm in the lessons that challenge them, encourage them to think creatively, solve problems and use their initiative. In some classes, however, the tasks given to pupils require minimal thought and effort, and such teaching generates a more passive approach to learning.
- Pupils are friendly to each other around the school. They show respect and are treated with respect by their teachers.
- Initiatives to improve attendance have proved highly effective. The rigorous monitoring and chasing up of absence has resulted in an increase in overall attendance and significant reduction in persistent absenteeism. Attendance in 2017 was above the national average for 2016. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is significantly improved.
- Fixed-term exclusions have reduced steadily over the last three years from above-average levels. Pupils are supported effectively to improve their behaviour and in most cases this avoids the need to exclude. Permanent exclusions are very rare and well documented when unavoidable.
- The attendance, personal development and safety of those pupils attending the alternative provision are checked every day pupils are out of school. Leaders visit the providers to make sure that pupils' needs are met and that they make gains in their learning and personal development. Pupils who have attended 'Upcycle' are extremely positive about their experience and feel that they gained enormously in their social and work-related skills.

Outcomes for pupils — Requires improvement

- Pupils do not make good progress in all subjects. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve, given their starting points. In some classes, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils need to do to achieve their target grades and this slows pupils' progress.
- The most able pupils do not make the progress they should in some subjects. This is because teaching lacks the challenge and depth needed to enable pupils to attain at the higher grades. There are pockets of good practice, for example in the top sets for English and mathematics, but the most able pupils in mixed-ability groups do not make the same progress as they do in those sets. Leaders are aware of this and are monitoring teaching and progress carefully. They are taking appropriate action to secure improvements.
- In 2016, pupils' progress and attainment were below average in most subjects. Pupils with middle and high prior attainment did not make expected progress. Teachers and leaders analysed the reasons for this and have taken effective action to ensure that pupils currently in school do better. Improvements to teaching are quickening pupils' progress. Pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations improved considerably in 2017, most notably in English and mathematics.
- Most pupils who are currently in school make at least expected and sometimes better progress. They get off to a good start in Year 7 due to the improved information-

sharing arrangements with partner primary schools. Pupils with lower prior attainment and those of middle ability continue to make expected or better progress in Years 8, 9 and 10, where the curriculum is planned carefully to meet their needs.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, both in lessons and in support groups. The detailed analysis of the needs and barriers to achievement enable teachers to build on their prior attainment successfully.
- The relatively high proportion of pupils who join the school at times other than the start of Year 7 are supported well to settle in and learn alongside their peers. Work is adapted to meet their needs appropriately.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve just as well as other pupils in school. They benefit from well-planned support in small groups or individually and a wide range of enrichment activities. As with other pupils in school, they have not achieved as well as non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. The differences are diminishing, however, particularly for the lower- and middle-ability disadvantaged pupils. The most able disadvantaged pupils, alongside other most-able pupils, are still not making the most rapid progress they could and are prioritised in school improvement planning.

School details

Unique reference number	112375
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10036772

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 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Timothy Herbert
Executive Headteacher	Judith Schafer
Telephone number	01697 320509
Website	http://beaconhill.cumbria.sch.uk/
Email address	beaconhill@beaconhill.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 September – 1 October 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Beacon Hill is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The executive headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the last inspection. The executive headteacher is also the headteacher of Solway Technology College.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2016, which are the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11. Floor standards for 2017 were not published at the time of the inspection.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and none speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average.

- The proportion of pupils receiving support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan is well above average.
- The school uses alternative provision provided by the West Cumbria Achievement Zone and 'UpCycle'.
- The school participates in the 'Getting Better Together' collaborative of West Cumbrian Schools and works in closer partnership with Solway Technology College and Keswick School. Some pupils study GCSE subjects in humanities at Solway.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in many subjects. She looked at pupils' work in lessons and carried out a more detailed work scrutiny of a sample of books.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour around school. She spoke with pupils about learning and behaviour in lessons and in meetings.
- The inspector examined a range of documentation, including: the school's self-evaluation; improvement planning; information on the progress of pupils currently in school; records of monitoring, performance management and quality assurance; attendance and behaviour records; and records relating to safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher, subject and pastoral leaders, staff, three representatives of the governing body and local authority representatives. Telephone contact was made with alternative providers and the director of Cumbria children's services.
- The inspector took account of 13 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire and 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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