

# Beacon Hill School

Rising Sun Cottages, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear NE28 9JW

## Inspection dates

5–6 December 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>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and carers and pupils

### This is a good school

- The recently appointed headteacher and the refreshed governing body are successfully helping the school to recover after a temporary dip in its performance.
- The broad and balanced curriculum gives all pupils opportunities to develop communication, academic and life skills.
- Pupils' progress is good. Students in the sixth form are well prepared for their future and leave school with a good range of qualifications.
- Pupils with complex needs make good strides in their personal, social and communication development from their individual starting points.
- Teaching is usually good, with highly personalised learning taking place. Teachers and teaching assistants understand the complex needs of the pupils. However, there are minor inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils.
- Data is not always used effectively to accurately track progress and to inform whole-school development planning.
- The behaviour of the pupils is good. Pupils love coming to school and they show good attitudes to learning. Behaviour management is consistent throughout the school. Complex behaviours associated with the pupils' special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities have little impact on the learning of others.
- Pupils feel safe in their school. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are based on respect and care. Teachers clearly know their pupils and individuality is celebrated and well catered for.
- Pupils and their families are supported to attend school regularly, although complex medical conditions can sometimes make regular attendance difficult.
- The early years provision has well-established routines which encourage the youngest children to engage quickly with learning.
- The sixth form allows students to move successfully into the adult world, fostering independence skills and self-confidence.
- The middle leaders are passionate about their jobs, although they know that there is more to do to further develop their skills.

## Full report

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

- Improve the use of data by:
  - making sure that pupils' progress is accurately measured from a range of individual starting points.
  - ensuring that information about pupils' attainment and progress is used more consistently to inform teachers' planning for individual pupils and groups, especially the most able
  - collecting data from a wider range of subjects
  - using data more effectively to inform whole-school development planning.
- Further develop middle leadership by:
  - developing middle leaders' skills in school self-evaluation so that they have a clearer overview of their areas of responsibility and can make a fuller contribution to whole-school development planning
  - continuing to develop middle leaders' skills in monitoring the impact of teaching on learning so that the progress made by pupils in their phase or subject area is consistently good.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher and governors have a clear vision for the school and a strong passion to improve. This vision is shared by staff and parents, who speak highly of the changes being made within the school. The way that staff care for the pupils and for each other is a strength and leads to happy, safe pupils who are ready to learn.
- The headteacher knows the areas that need to be strengthened and is making effective and rapid changes to secure further improvement.
- Middle leaders are keen and enthusiastic and know their individual pupils well. However, some middle leaders know that they need to develop a clearer overview of their area of responsibility so that they can better identify areas that still need development and make a fuller contribution to whole-school improvements. Middle leaders are beginning to develop skills, including making checks on the quality of teaching. However, they know that there is more to do to make sure that their work addresses minor inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Staff and newly qualified teachers are well supported. Performance management is used to develop staff in all areas of the school.
- The school has very recently implemented a new data collection system. This aims to provide teachers with more accurate information about pupils' attainment and progress and has the potential to further strengthen their teaching. However, some of the useful information from previous systems, including baseline assessments, has not been incorporated fully and the new system currently focuses on too narrow a range of subjects.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively alongside the additional physical education (PE) and sport premium funding. This additional funding is used to provide additional support to eligible pupils, specialist equipment and fair access to all areas of the curriculum, including extracurricular activities such as swimming and residential experiences.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is also used effectively to support pupils to access the curriculum through the use of technology tailored to their specific needs.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and caters for the specific needs of all pupils within the school. There is a strong focus on developing communication through speech, sign, pictures, symbols, photographs and technological aids as appropriate.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values are promoted well. Visual displays, a high level of respect and carefully planned lessons contribute successfully and this area of the curriculum is fully embedded within school life.
- Creativity is encouraged through art, drama, dance and sport. These subjects are hugely enjoyed by the pupils, including those who take part in the Glee Club.
- Older students receive appropriate careers guidance that is linked to a comprehensive work experience programme. This, along with the life-skills programme running at Beacon Towers, fully prepares the students for life after the sixth form.

## Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is good. There have been a large number of changes in governors in the last 18 months. The chair of the governing body has ensured that new governors come to the board with a wealth of relevant experience and skills and has ensured that a full training package supporting their role is in place.
- Governors have been instrumental in the changes that have taken place within the leadership and management of the school. They are very clear about the vision and focus of the school and the areas for improvement. Governors have promoted some middle leaders to temporary assistant headteacher positions and have also fully supported the move towards further developing middle leadership within the school.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a culture of safeguarding which runs throughout the school from the headteacher through the staff to the pupils. Safeguarding is woven through the curriculum at an appropriate level for the age and understanding of each individual pupil.
- Rigorous safeguarding practices are in place. The safeguarding lead is knowledgeable and well supported by the headteacher and middle leaders.
- Robust procedures are in place to identify and handle causes for concern. The school works closely with the local authority to ensure that all concerns are recorded and referred in a timely manner.
- Parents who spoke with inspectors said that their children feel safe at the school.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Personalised teaching is evident across the school, and books and learning journals show the small, successful steps in learning being made.
- The development of pupils' effective communication skills can be seen. Communication in print, Makaton and the school's own picture communication books, along with specific information communication technology (ICT) programmes, support learning and development effectively. Independence is well promoted, for example through pupils being able to explain what they want to eat at snack time using a range of communication methods suitable to their needs.
- Increased teaching hours for literacy, phonics and mathematics have been introduced this year, which are reflected in the rapid progress seen in pupils' books, especially in the primary phase.
- Staff usually have high expectations of pupils and positive praise is used to good effect throughout the school. There are many examples of strong teaching and learning, where activities are carefully planned to meet the needs of pupils and teachers have a firm understanding of the next steps each pupil will need to take to make good progress. Occasionally, however, teachers' expectations of pupils are not as clear and they do not use the information they have about pupils' previous progress to inform learning activities. When this happens, pupils' progress slows.

- Staff are very positive about the support they receive from colleagues and the senior team. Peer mentoring is evident. Staff who have recently taught in mainstream schools have found this extra support particularly effective in developing their skills in meeting the specific and additional needs of pupils at Beacon Hill.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils. Prompts to help pupils engage with learning, maintain interest and perseverance are coupled with respect and care for the personal needs of each pupil.
- Clear targets are set for each pupil that build on previous knowledge and fit in with their education, health and care plan. Parents find this approach particularly helpful and state that this helps them to be included in their child's education and have a better understanding of what their child needs to achieve next.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils love coming to school and this can be seen as soon as they enter the school in the morning. It is evident in the handover from parents to staff, which is managed in a sensitive and supportive manner.
- Pupils say that they feel safe within the school and parents agree. The school helps pupils to understand, as well as possible, how to keep themselves safe, sometimes on an individual basis. Online safety and healthy relationships are key topics in the upper school and sixth form.
- Pupils of all ages are encouraged to make friends and be a good friend to others. This culture has led to a very low incidence of bullying. Pupils benefit greatly from the respectful and caring relationships they have with the staff. These strong relationships support the pupils' growth into secure and confident learners.
- Pupils, on the whole, have positive attitudes to learning and any low-level disengagement is positively challenged and the pupils are brought back onto task.
- Transition between upper school and the sixth form is seamless, with a sharing of staff across the two sites. Residential opportunities are in place to foster relationships between the new students in the sixth form and those who have completed their first year at the provision.
- Attendance is above the national average for special schools. The school works closely with the local authority and families to help and support those pupils who are classed as persistently absent, along with those whose medical conditions mean that they miss large periods of education.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are cheerful, welcoming and curious about visitors. They are happy to share their work and successes with visitors to the classroom.
- Classrooms, corridors and the dining hall are calm environments. Pupils are supported

to move around school in a positive manner.

- Pupils do occasionally experience difficulties connected to their learning difficulties, by showing anxious or inappropriate behaviour. These times are managed carefully by staff and are rarely a disruption to the learning of other pupils.
- In lessons, the vast majority of pupils are happy, confident learners who are used to routines and expectations and respond well to them. Staff give pupils opportunities to self-regulate their own behaviour, with the clear expectation that this is not an excuse to miss learning.
- Pupils usually demonstrate good levels of concentration, but when the pace of the lesson slows, they lose interest and can disengage.
- The school's robust behaviour policy is applied consistently throughout the school. Incidents are monitored and tracked to inform staff about hotspots and trigger points.

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Overall, pupils make good progress from their different starting points. All pupils start the school with skills which are significantly below those expected for their age. Almost all pupils achieve their personal learning plan targets.
- Leaders have recognised that progress in mathematics and English was not as strong as in other curriculum areas and have taken steps to rectify this by increasing the number of taught hours in these subjects. Significant progress is evident in pupils' books from this academic year.
- Personalised learning plans are written for each pupil, based around their education, health and care plan. These personalised learning plans support the development of pupils' academic and social skills and lead to a holistic overview of the progress made by pupils.
- The school has recently changed the way it monitors progress in order to allow smaller steps in learning to be tracked and celebrated successfully.
- Phonics and listening activities are delivered across the whole school. This system is effective from the first school through to the upper school. However, it is less successful within the early years, where there is a lack of clear focus for the children.
- In some subjects, there is a lack of challenge for the most able pupils. The staff have high aspirations for pupils but this is not translated into the way lessons are taught consistently.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- The early years leader has considerable knowledge and experience and knows the children well. Staff have an accurate and shared understanding of the needs of each child. The curriculum is broad and exciting, and is based around the children's needs. As a result, the children are safe and happy and want to be involved in their learning.
- The stimulating environment provided in the indoor and outdoor areas is a strength, along with strong routines, successful relationships between teachers and children and a high level of care. Work and routines developed throughout early years prepare the

children well for their move into Year 1. Teachers and support assistants set high standards for personal, social and academic achievement, based on individual need.

- Morning routines are well established and calm, allowing children to communicate, appropriate to their level of need, to the teacher and the rest of the class. This consistency allows parents to be involved in the positive handover of their children into education and smooths the transition for the most anxious.
- Good outcomes are evidenced in learning journals. There are no marked differences between the progress of Nursery and Reception children.
- The strategic overview of the department is weaker than in other areas of the school. Self-evaluation systems are not fully embedded.

### **16 to 19 study programmes**

**Good**

- Care and support lie at the heart of this sixth-form provision. Students talk about how safe they feel and how they enjoy their learning. The college is a safe environment where students develop independence.
- Leadership and management of the sixth-form provision are strong and it is clear that, despite being on a separate site, the sixth form is an extension of the main school.
- The curriculum helps to develop students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, in addition to their personal and social skills. They have further opportunity to develop through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- Behaviour is good. Students are aware of what is expected of them and respond well to the adult environment that they are given. Students are polite and respectful to their peers, teachers and visitors. They are happy and excited to share their work.
- Life skills are developed at 'Beacon Towers', where students practise cooking, ironing and other life skills. Great care is taken by leaders to ensure that transition into the sixth-form provision is smooth. Year 11 students attend Beacon Towers and become used to college staff and systems. A residential programme in Years 11 and 12 helps new students to make friends with older students.
- Teaching is personalised and both teachers and teaching assistants know the students well. Students make strong progress both pastorally and academically because their needs are understood.
- Students have access to a range of vocational qualifications matching their needs and abilities that stretch and challenge them to do their best. They also benefit from a personalised work experience programme which also matches their interests. Careers advice and guidance are effective and personalised, linking in well with the vocational qualifications and life-skill training offered by the school. Careers guidance supports students into further study, training or employment successfully.

## School details

Unique reference number	131544
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	10024084

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	All-through special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	163
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Mills
Headteacher	Justina Terretta
Telephone number	0191 643 3000
Website	<a href="http://www.beaconhill.n-tyneside.sch.uk">www.beaconhill.n-tyneside.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:beacon.hill@northtyneside.gov.uk">beacon.hill@northtyneside.gov.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	5–6 March 2014

## Information about this school

- Beacon Hill is a large, purpose-built school which accepts pupils from the North Tyneside local authority area.
- A new headteacher and chair of the governing body have been appointed within the last 18 months.
- The school is based on two sites, one of which provides for the early years and primary- and secondary-aged pupils, based at Beacon Hill. The sixth form is located at a second site five miles away in Queen Alexandra College.
- The majority of children have an education, health and care plan. Those who do not



are in the early years provision and their needs are currently being assessed.

- The majority of the pupils are boys of White British origin.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as a second language is well below that found nationally.
- About a third of pupils are disadvantaged and supported by pupil premium funding. The school also receives the PE and sport premium for the primary school pupils, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding and special educational needs funding.
- The school is a regional centre for training pupils for independent travel.
- The school provides an outreach service for sensory impairment and portage services on behalf of the local authority.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning across a wide range of lessons and learning activities at the main school and in the sixth form. A proportion of these visits were carried out with the headteacher.
- Pupils' written work was examined during lessons and during a book scrutiny.
- Inspectors observed pupils' conduct while they were arriving at and departing the school, as well as during breaktime and lunchtime. There were also informal discussions with pupils throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors took into account the 40 responses to Parent View and spoke to five parents. The results of staff surveys were also taken into account.
- Inspectors conducted meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and middle leaders. Inspectors also met with four school governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- A meeting was held with a representative from the local authority.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's evaluation report, school development and action plans and performance management documents. Inspectors also reviewed minutes from governing body meetings, records of the monitoring of teaching and information relating to pupils' attendance and achievement. Safeguarding documents and records relating to behaviour were also examined.

## Inspection team

Tricia Stevens, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Wardle	Ofsted Inspector
Zoe Westley	Ofsted Inspector

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