

The Beacon Folkestone

Park Farm Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5DN

Inspection dates

12–13 February 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The executive headteacher, supported by the headteacher and senior leaders, has a clear vision for the future of the school. This is shared by all the staff, who believe that outstanding is just a word and that the school can always evolve further.
- The highly effective governors share the staff's ambition.
- Senior and middle leaders are very skilled and ensure that each pupil can succeed. Pupils make excellent progress from their starting points because learning is personalised and expectations are high.
- Teaching is very effective. Teachers are encouraged to be reflective and are supported by well-considered training and coaching. The success of the self-reflective coaching practice has led leaders to recognise that this approach would benefit and support the teaching assistants' professional development.
- The behaviour of pupils in classrooms and around school is outstanding. Pupils feel safe at school and this enables them to thrive.
- The school's early years provision gives children a strong start. The children make excellent progress because activities are planned carefully to take account of their individual needs and starting points.
- Students aged 16 to 19 make outstanding progress. They are very well prepared for further education, training or employment. Staff work highly effectively with providers, parents and carers to make sure that students' transition is as smooth as possible when they leave the school.
- The Beacon has two specialist teams that are co-located with specialist National Health Service (NHS) and social services colleagues in a multi-agency support hub (MASH). This is a huge benefit to the school community and has led to strong and effective partnerships with parents and external agencies.
- Leaders and teachers at The Beacon regularly offer their support and expertise to other schools in the local area and across the Kent Special Educational Needs Trust (KSENT).

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the self-reflective and coaching culture to include teaching assistants.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The executive headteacher, headteacher, and senior and middle leadership teams are passionate in their determination to ensure that all pupils achieve the best possible outcomes. Leaders evaluate clearly the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know their school well and they are very clear about the priorities for the school.
- Middle leaders are very motivated and committed to the work of the school. All middle leaders who spoke to inspectors were clearly able to articulate their areas of responsibility, as well as how their action plans fit into the school development plan. They were clear as to the impact that they are making. Middle leaders effectively drive improvements.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning is highly effective. Teaching staff reflect on their teaching and leaders match stronger staff to support and coach teachers who are new to the profession or who need to develop their skills. Leaders recognise the success of the self-reflective coaching approach with teachers and now plan to use this type of training to benefit the skill development of teaching assistants.
- The curriculum is carefully thought out and adapted to meet the needs of all pupils, taking into account their ability and stage of development. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and the promotion of fundamental British values are threaded throughout the curriculum. Pupils in every key stage have valuable opportunities to attend a residential experience. These include staying in a cottage, camping and Euro Disney. These activities are valuable for developing pupils' life skills as well as improving their social interaction and communication.
- The school's careers education, information, advice and guidance are strong and the vast majority of students who left last year are still in education, training or employment.
- Leaders' use of extra funding for sport is a strength. A comprehensive programme is on offer which weaves in many elements of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Events and activities are designed with the physical, social and emotional needs of pupils in mind. Staff are well trained. The Beacon is the only special school in Kent to achieve the Kent school games platinum award for its excellent sports provision and programmes.
- Leaders' use of funding to support pupils who are disadvantaged is highly effective. Governors rigorously check that leaders can account for the spending plans for every individual disadvantaged pupil. As a result, there is little difference in the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils compared to non-disadvantaged pupils with similar starting points.
- The executive headteacher oversees the work of the school and is also the lead professional of the KSENT, which is a group of 24 special schools in Kent. In this role, the executive headteacher is working with other schools to share good practice and provide training and support. The KSENT has established pupils' work moderation groups. The Beacon attends the moderation sessions, and this has enabled the school to successfully verify their judgements on pupil progress.

- Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, showed, prior to the inspection, that a few parents were not always happy with everything in the school. Leaders have responded by ensuring that a senior leader takes the lead on improving parental engagement and parents’ evenings, and other events are already planned. Leaders are very proactive and react positively to any concerns raised. For example, they have adapted the system for drop-off and collection of pupils. Leaders have improved the efficiency of the transport arrangements at the start and end of the day, as witnessed by inspectors.

Governance of the school

- Governors are a highly skilled group who provide strong, effective support and challenge to leaders. Governors know the school well and are frequent visitors. They attend meetings with senior and middle leaders and join leaders on learning walks so that they can see at first-hand pupils’ educational experiences.
- Governors have a clear and perceptive understanding of the school’s effectiveness. The governors’ monitoring cycle rigorously scrutinises the quality of pupils’ education. Governors ensure that they receive the right information to make appropriate checks on the quality of education for different groups of pupils. Governors challenge leaders to ensure that pupils have the best outcomes.

Safeguarding

- Safeguarding is effective.
- There is a very strong safeguarding culture within the school. Leaders and governors have ensured that the arrangements for checking the suitability of staff and volunteers are carried out thoroughly and accurately.
- Safeguarding training for all staff is comprehensive and up to date and staff have a very clear understanding of how to keep pupils safe from harm. This ensures that staff are proactive in dealing with any safeguarding concerns.
- Record-keeping is meticulous, and any concern is dealt with quickly. The school has its own hub of multi-agency teams and, consequently, there are excellent links with external agencies.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when online. This enables them to make positive choices in their use of the internet and social media sites when they are out of school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The school caters for a wide range of needs. It provides for these needs by delivering a personalised three-tier curriculum, with pupils accessing learning at the appropriate level within three distinct age-related areas that the school calls zones.
- The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Senior and middle leaders monitor teaching and learning effectively. They use the information gleaned intelligently to support the development of staff skills and expertise so staff can help pupils to achieve their next steps in learning. Scrutiny of pupils’ work in books and in lessons, done

jointly with leaders, confirmed that pupils make strong progress. Teachers feel that they are given the support and professional development to refine their skills and are encouraged to take risks and be innovative. This has ensured that teaching is of consistently high quality across year groups and subjects. Consequently, pupils make excellent progress.

- Staff have an excellent understanding of pupils' needs. They know their pupils well and use the assessment information to plan activities that enable the pupils to make effective progress. Pupils are set challenging targets. Where pupils need lesson content to be adapted or interpreted, staff do this expertly and prepare high-quality and bespoke resources which they use successfully to engage pupils in learning. In lessons, pupils quickly become engrossed in the activities. Additional adults provide strong support for pupils. Their teamwork with teaching staff is very effective.
- Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and additional sensory needs (ASN) are exceptionally well catered for. In the PMLD classrooms, pupils experience learning based on sensory experiences with purposeful communication elements. Staff treat pupils sensitively, with understandable care and nurture. Through their well-planned use of communication strategies, staff encourage pupils to respond positively to requests.
- In the ASN classrooms, staff prepare bespoke sessions in which learning tasks are broken down into very small steps. Time is used well so that pupils have very effective learning activities and well-timed rewards. Leaders use a variety of well-researched methods that enable pupils to make outstanding progress academically and ensure that they develop social, emotional and communication skills to become effective learners.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school has excellent facilities which include adventure play equipment, a sunken trampoline and a wood where pupils take part in the forest school. Additionally, there are therapy spaces and a fully functioning detached house for the delivery of a life-skills programme. These facilities really enhance the pupils' learning experiences and help them to develop vital emotional, social, communication and independence skills.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils are confident learners. Positive relationships with staff enable them to succeed in lessons and make rapid progress in their personal development and communication skills.
- Pupils' learning is further enhanced by the variety of clubs and activities that take place daily. These include basketball, a film club, the Duke of Edinburgh award and soft play. The school's offer is well thought through. Many pupils arrive on school transport and leaders ensure that these pupils are still able to take part in after-school clubs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.

- Staff manage behaviour very well and support pupils to re-engage in tasks quickly if they lose focus. Pupils have an awareness of expectations around acceptable behaviour and how to treat each other, and other people, courteously and with respect. Pupils were very polite and happy to speak to inspectors.
- Staff are well trained to respond to any inappropriate behaviour. Systems for recording behavioural incidents are very thorough. Careful evaluation of the information that the system provides has allowed leaders to put strategies in place to reduce challenging behaviour. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour have decreased, and exclusion is rare.
- Systems to monitor attendance are well established. Some pupils have complex medical needs and leaders work proactively with parents to ensure that absence and persistent absence is minimalised. All absence is followed up rigorously and, as a result, attendance is above average for special schools.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils arrive at the school with academic levels typically below those of pupils nationally. Leaders use the information from previous schools and their own assessments to establish a secure baseline from which their progress can be measured.
- The school sets pupils aspirational, challenging targets. Leaders moderate the pupils' work internally and externally with other schools to ensure that pupils are on track to meet these goals. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make at least good progress from their different starting points. Where pupils are not making expected progress, interventions and support are put in place to enable pupils to achieve better outcomes.
- Leaders ensure that, as well as supporting pupils to achieve academically, they also provide therapeutic interventions which help pupils to develop their communication, personal, social and independence skills. As a result, pupils make excellent progress towards the outcomes specified in their education, health and care plans.
- Reading has a high priority across the school. Daily reading sessions have successfully enabled the great majority of pupils to make strong progress in this area. Throughout the school, staff encourage pupils to read widely and often. Consequently, pupils are exposed to a wide range of authors and genres.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The leadership of the early years is highly effective. Leaders have a clear overview of strengths and constantly adapt and improve provision as children's needs change.
- Excellent transition procedures support children to make a stress-free start at school. Children enter the early years with very low starting points. Effective partnerships with parents and other specialists, including from the MAST, mean that children and families are supported well.
- The environment is stimulating. Staff provide a wide range of practical activities to encourage children to learn and develop well. Effective provision ensures that children make good or outstanding progress from their starting points, particularly in their

personal, social and emotional development, physical development and in their communication and language skills.

- Children's progress is carefully monitored. The comprehensive information gathered reveals any gaps in children's learning and enables staff to provide interventions, so that the children achieve the best outcomes.
- Staff ensure that children's individual health needs are clearly identified in order to provide care and therapy. The safety of the children is a priority and qualified staff support access to learning, and all statutory welfare requirements are met.
- The staff have developed warm and caring relationships with the children. The staff ensure that there is a consistent approach to managing children's behaviour and, as a result, the children's behaviour is excellent.
- Children are fully prepared for their move into Year 1. The move is planned carefully, and provision is adapted to children's needs so that it supports their continuous development.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- The leadership of the 16 to 19 programme is excellent. The curriculum follows different pathways that are dependent on students' abilities and stages of development. The programmes are highly individualised and suited to their needs. There is a continuing emphasis on developing students' English, mathematics and communication skills, as well as essential life and independence skills. Students make excellent progress from their different starting points and gain worthwhile accreditation, often arising from their interests and abilities.
- Attendance is good. It is monitored carefully by leaders. Students' behaviour is exemplary, and all students engage well in learning.
- Students' learning is promoted through a range of practical and purposeful activities. Students learn how to travel safely and shop independently. Students develop life skills in the purpose-built house on the school site. Inspectors observed students in the house enthusiastically preparing their lunch, cleaning windows, washing up and learning other independent skills.
- Students benefit from high-quality, work-related learning. The placements include internal opportunities, such as working in the school's café, working with the site team or working within the classroom. External placements include situations in local businesses, hotels and restaurants. All work experience places are carefully risk assessed and, where possible, are located close to the students' homes so that they can travel to work independently. These experiences help to provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills to gain successful employment.
- Students are very well prepared for the next stage in their education. Students are provided with excellent careers advice and guidance and are supported well to make appropriate choices. As a result, the majority of students remain in education, training or employment after leaving the school.

School details

Unique reference number	119044
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10088082

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

Type of school	All-through special
School category	Foundation 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	365
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	63
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Nixon
Headteacher	Neil Birch (executive headteacher), Ady Young (headteacher)
Telephone number	01303 847555
Website	www.thebeacon.kent.sch.uk
Email address	office@thebeacon.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Beacon was formed to accommodate pupils from its two predecessor schools, Foxwood and Highview.
- The school opened in September 2016.
- The Beacon hosts a multi-agency support hub containing National Health Service provision, paediatric services and children's social services alongside the school's multi agency support team. Additionally, the Beacon runs the specialist teaching and learning service for the Shepway District.

- The school caters for pupils aged 3 to 19 with complex needs, profound and severe learning difficulties, and physical and sensory impairment.
- All the pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support provided by the pupil premium is higher than average.
- The executive headteacher is also the lead professional of the Kent Special Educational Needs Trust.
- A senior leader was promoted in January and is now the headteacher at The Beacon.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all key stages and year groups. All lessons were visited jointly with leaders. Inspectors and leaders carried out a joint scrutiny of pupils' work, covering all year groups and subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, headteacher, senior leaders, the governing body and with representatives of the local authority. Meetings were also held with senior and middle leaders to talk about their areas of responsibility.
- Inspectors took account of 62 responses recorded on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 22 free-text comments. An inspector also spoke to four parents at the start of the school day and the lead inspector spoke to a parent on the telephone.
- The views of staff were gathered through meetings with groups of staff and by taking account of the 72 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils and spoke to pupils in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including: the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; an analysis of the school's performance data; information relating to the attendance and behaviour of pupils; safeguarding and child protection records; the curriculum; the school improvement adviser's evaluations of the quality of teaching over time; and minutes from the governors' meetings.

Inspection team

Susan Conway, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Rosemary Keen	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Cox	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2019