

Alternative Education Service – The Beacon Centre

Temple Park Road, South Shields, Tyne and Wear NE34 0QA

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- After the previous inspection, the development of the school was hampered by funding difficulties. In addition, a full restructure of the staff has not yet reached its conclusion.
- The rate of improvement has increased significantly in the primary phase of the school. However, this improvement is not evident in the secondary school. As a result, pupils do not receive a consistently good standard of education.
- The quality of teaching across the school is variable. Teachers do not use assessment information consistently. They do not ensure that all pupils are given tasks that meet their varying needs and abilities. Often, work lacks challenge, especially for the most able pupils.
- Not all teachers question pupils effectively to identify any misconceptions, or to make sure that pupils know how to improve their work.
- In lessons, some pupils do not behave well or show good attitudes to learning. Some lose interest and their motivation to learn. This disrupts pupils' learning. Not all pupils are clear about the school's behaviour policy.
- There is a significant number of temporary staff in all positions across the school. The new leadership team has the capacity and vision to move the school forward in all areas. However, many of the initiatives are too newly implemented to show the desired impact.
- Although leaders have implemented robust attendance procedures, rates of absence remain too high. Fixed-term exclusions issued by leaders are also high.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have developed a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. The programme and choice of subjects on offer, at both primary and secondary phases, meet the diverse range of pupils' strengths and needs in the school.
- Additional funding is used well to support those pupils who are disadvantaged.
- Pupils in the primary provision make good progress as a result of a well-structured learning programme, high expectations and improving environment.
- All pupils leave the school at the end of their education with a place in further education, training or employment.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - continuing to develop and embed strategies that leaders use to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and the quality of pupils' learning over time
 - ensuring that the restructure and subsequent staff training improves the quality of teaching across the school.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that teachers provide pupils with work that reflects consistently high expectations of what pupils of all abilities know, understand and do.
- Reduce rates of absence and persistent absence by continuing to address these issues with a wide range of strategies.
- Improve behaviour and reduce rates of exclusion by developing alternative ways for leaders and staff to reinforce their high expectations of pupils' behaviour.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- After the previous short inspection, the rate of improvement was hindered by the lack of clarity around funding. The planned staffing restructure, which will provide much needed stability, is still ongoing. As a result, much of the school's work still requires further improvement to be good. The quality of teaching, although improving, remains variable. Rates of absence and fixed-term exclusion are high, and many of the changes that need to be made are still at an early stage in their implementation.
- The new leadership team have introduced many systems to strengthen areas of the school identified in the previous inspection report. For example, they have improved the way that pupils' learning is evaluated. Despite this, the systems are underdeveloped and do not consistently provide leaders with the information they need to improve pupils' progress further.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of what the school does well, and which areas require improvement. They are honest about areas of the school's work that they feel are not good enough. Leaders' actions have already had a positive impact in the primary provision. Where weaknesses remain, leaders have clear and appropriate plans to secure the improvements that are necessary.
- Leaders have a sound rationale for the design of the curriculum, which is based upon a determination for every pupil to successfully move on to the next stage in their education. In the primary provision, this makes a strong contribution to meeting this aim. Pupils study a range of subjects, which enable them to reduce any academic gaps between them and their mainstream peers, while supporting their social and behavioural need. This enables most primary pupils to move back into mainstream education. In the secondary provision, the curriculum is still in development. Although additional subjects, including science, have been added this year, leaders are aware that there is still work to be done to cement the personalised learning that the pupils require to succeed after school.
- Across the school, pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) knowledge is promoted effectively. Leaders ensure that SMSC is taught through the 'ologies' curriculum, where pupils learn about other faiths and cultures. This is also woven throughout other subjects, for example in the choice of texts used in English. Despite these strengths, the development of pupils' respect for others is not as strong in the secondary provision, where some pupils show disrespect to their peers and teachers.
- Three parents, spoken to by the inspection team, spoke positively about their communication with the school. They felt this communication gave them an accurate picture of how their child was progressing, both academically and with their behaviour needs. One parent felt that communication was difficult at times and this led to frustration.
- Leaders use the limited amount of additional funding they receive for disadvantaged pupils and sports premium well. Initiatives to support attendance is beginning to have a positive impact on improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Primary pupils have enjoyed the swimming lessons that have been introduced this year as part of the

additional sport premium funding the school receives.

Governance of the school

- Members of the management committee share leaders' determination to provide pupils with a good standard of education. Members share experience of the local area and of working in education. They have undertaken training to support their knowledge of special educational needs and working in a behaviour setting.
- Members use their knowledge to hold leaders to account and to support them through the difficult process of restructuring. They have been instrumental in guiding leaders with their challenge to the local authority regarding funding.
- Members are actively involved in school life. They use their knowledge and expertise to ensure, first hand, that the changes being made are having a positive impact on the education provided to the pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The designated safeguarding leader and his deputy have introduced robust policies, procedures and whole-staff training, which ensures the safety of all pupils in the school.
- Leaders now keep accurate records of their work to safeguard pupils and demonstrate a clear method for tracking concerns for individual pupils.
- The safeguarding team has a comprehensive understanding of the risks which pupils face outside of school. They have put together an innovative package of support, which includes external agencies such as Street Doctors to open discussions about knife crime and Operation Encompass to support pupils' use of key adults within school.
- Members of staff have up to date training on safeguarding, which includes training on child protection, child sexual exploitation and preventing violent extremism. Staff are knowledgeable about their pupils and use the knowledge gained through training to support the vulnerable pupils in the school.
- Pupils are safe, and feel safe in the school. Pupils are clear that the staff at the school support them to be safe and they know who they can talk to in the event of any concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent across the school. Where teaching is of a good quality, and staff are confident, pupils are engaged and keen to learn. Where staff are less confident, particularly in the area of behaviour management, pupils are less engaged and demonstrate difficult behaviour.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils know, can do and understand are not consistently high enough in some subjects. As a result, teachers do not routinely provide the challenge, over time, that enables pupils to make strong progress across the curriculum.
- The effectiveness of assessment is also variable. New systems, introduced by leaders,

are not yet embedded, and as a result, some teachers do not have a clear understanding of how, and why, they assess pupils. Where teachers have fully understood the system and used this to inform their planning, stronger teaching can be seen. For example, in primary literacy, personalised planning was evident during a story-writing lesson. Pupils were given individual support based on need to ensure that they all wrote an individual story.

- The use of learning support assistants (LSAs) is inconsistent. In some lessons, LSAs were effectively used to support individuals or groups of pupils with their work, enabling pupils to focus and think deeper. In other lessons, LSAs were absent or dealing with behaviour incidents, and as a result, learning for some pupils slowed.
- Derogatory language is an issue in secondary provision classrooms and around the school. This is rapidly picked up, and challenged, by all staff. However, the impact of this challenge is not yet evident in pupils' attitudes and language.
- Pupils on alternative education receive a strong vocational offer. Their functional skills development in English and mathematics is less robust. Leaders are working with the alternative providers to ensure that the level of functional skills tuition received mirrors that of the vocational training.
- In some subjects, for example secondary science, pupils could articulate what they had learned in a particular topic, and what they needed to do to improve their learning. This was mirrored in their workbooks, where clear progression of learning could be seen. In other subjects this was not evident. Pupils had little understanding of the work they had covered, and books showed repeated mistakes in, for example, spelling and grammar.
- Across the school, staff work hard to build positive relationships with the pupils. In the primary provision, pupils respect and trust staff. They are keen to impress their teachers and do well. This model is not yet embedded into the secondary provision. Some staff enjoy positive relationships with pupils, and the pupils' learning and engagement in lessons reflect this. However, this is not yet the case for all staff.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement to be good. Although there is strong developmental work being carried out with pupils across the school, this is not yet consistent and, as a result, the school requires improvement to be good.
- Pupils attend The Beacon Centre with low self-esteem and complex behaviour needs. Staff listen and support pupils to develop their self-esteem and confidence. As a result, pupils begin to feel secure in school and are ready to learn.
- Some pupils in the secondary provision struggle to have positive attitudes to learning. They have little respect for themselves, their peers or their teachers. As a result, their attendance, in both school and lessons, is weak, and learning is slowed. Other pupils take pride in their work. This can be seen in pupils working independently on personalised learning within classrooms, and the neat and tidy work in pupils' books,

but it is inconsistent across different subjects.

- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, both in school and outside. Primary pupils spoke about the work they had learned around being a good friend. This was seen in action during break and lunchtime when Year 6 pupils were helping and playing with the younger children. Pupils from the secondary provision talked about how to keep themselves safe online, sex and relationships education and healthy eating. However, this was not always seen in their actions. A few pupils choose to put themselves at risk in school through silly behaviours and wrong choices.
- Secondary-phase pupils benefit from a strong, impartial careers programme. This includes careers interviews, college and workplace visits and support to apply for a place on a course or apprenticeship. As a result, all Year 11 pupils, who left The Beacon Centre in 2018, went onto further education, training or employment.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Most pupils attend school regularly. However, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is above the national average. Leaders now have a robust system for tracking, monitoring and improving the attendance of pupils, which is starting to have an impact. This is particularly the case with the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, which has risen by over 25% since the start of this academic year. Attendance of children in the care of the local authority is over 90%.
- The behaviour of secondary-aged pupils, in lessons and around the site, requires improvement to be good. Routines and expectations are not yet clearly embedded or consistently applied. Leaders have provided training for both staff and pupils on the behaviour policy, which is ongoing. Staff mingle with pupils during break and lunchtime, which is supporting relationship building. This also ensures high levels of supervision.
- There has been an increase in fixed-term exclusions during this academic year. Leaders' analysis shows this is due, in part, to the new behaviour policy brought in by the leadership team in September 2018. It is also because of the complex needs of the pupils being referred to the school. Leaders have developed a 'raising standards plan', with clear actions to improve the use of fixed-term exclusions going forward.
- In the primary provision, routines and high expectations are embedded. As a result, pupils rapidly improve their behaviour. The majority of primary pupils concentrate well in lessons and show real interest in what they are learning. Staff work hard to support the pupils to understand why they behave in the way that they do, and to self-regulate quickly and return to class.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The changes that leaders have made across the school have led to improvements in pupils' outcomes. However, these outcomes still require improvement as systems which track progress and outcomes are still in their infancy. The systems do not have the depth of information required for leaders to track progress over time. Tracking sheets

are in use across the school, however, these are currently not being analysed effectively. Consequently, leaders do not have a clear picture of the impact on the outcome for pupils.

- Pupils join The Beacon Centre throughout the year, and often late in their schooling. Pupils complete an assessment when they arrive in school, but there is variation in how this is used to inform target-setting. As a result, progress is variable across a wide range of subjects.
- Attainment is below that seen nationally due to the pupils' wide range of complex need, the gaps in their learning prior to entering The Beacon Centre and the time that each individual pupil stays at the school.
- Since joining the school, the headteacher has developed the curriculum offer that pupils receive, particularly in key stage 4. This has increased the number of GCSE courses available to pupils. This is intended to enable pupils to achieve more recognised qualifications. Leaders have identified plans to increase this offer further in the coming year.
- There is no discernible difference in the progress of different groups within the school from their individual starting points. Disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and different genders make similar progress to their peers.
- Leaders' monitoring of primary pupils is beginning to show these pupils are making good progress and developing their skills well. Accurate assessment of pupils' learning is used effectively, in most primary classes, to plan the next steps for each individual.
- All Year 11 pupils move on successfully to post-16 education, employment or training. The school tracks and supports pupils during their first year of further study to ensure that they have every chance to continue their education successfully.

School details

Unique reference number	108666
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	10083944

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	Management Committee
Chair	Cllr Alan Kerr
Headteacher	Miss Katherine Walton
Telephone number	0191 454 6254
Website	www.thebeaconcentre.net
Email address	michelle.bays@thebeaconcentre.net
Date of previous inspection	11 September 2018

Information about this school

- The Beacon Centre is a pupil referral unit, currently offering places for 98 pupils aged between four and 16. The school is currently over capacity.
- The school is split over two sites. The primary provision has places for 20 pupils, and the secondary provision currently has 78 pupils, either attending the school or on alternative provision. The Beacon Centre uses four alternative provision providers and monitors the local authority's home and hospital education service.
- Along with the headteacher and deputy head, there are only three permanent members of staff. The school is currently going through a period of consultation regarding a whole-staff restructure.
- Almost 20% of pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHCP), with a further 10% of pupils currently awaiting a final decision on whether they will be granted an EHCP.
- Most pupils are White British. In the primary provision, the vast majority of pupils are

boys. In secondary, just over half of pupils are boys.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is considerably higher than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across a wide range of lessons and learning activities at the school.
- Pupils' written work was scrutinised in lessons and in their books.
- Inspectors observed pupils' conduct around the school, on arrival and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally at both sites and spoke formally to a small group of three pupils at the secondary provision. Six pupil surveys were also considered.
- Staff responses to the Ofsted questionnaire were considered, along with a meeting of secondary staff attended by 11 staff members, including a newly qualified teacher.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy head and middle leaders.
- Meetings were held with the vice-chair and one other member of the management committee, the local authority school improvement officer, the management team of one alternative provider and three parents. A telephone call was held with an additional parent.
- Inspectors visited the primary and secondary sites, along with a work experience placement for a pupil on alternative provision.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school self-evaluation report, school action plan and analysis of the spending of additional funding received.
- Inspectors also reviewed minutes of the meetings of the management committee, information relating to pupils' attendance and exclusion, assessment information and data relating to pupils' achievements. Safeguarding documentation and records relating to behaviour were also examined.

Inspection team

Tricia Stevens, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Diane Reynard

Ofsted Inspector

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