

Inspection of Beacon Hill Academy

High Arcal Drive, Sedgley, Dudley, West Midlands DY3 1BP

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

This is an improving school. It is well led and expectations of all are now high. The staff form a united team, committed to seeing the school continue to improve.

Pupils are benefiting from an increasingly effective quality of education. They study an appropriate range of subjects and learn well in many of them. However, there are weaknesses in how the curriculum is taught in some subjects. Pupils do not learn as well as they should when this is the case. The school has not done enough to promote reading.

Behaviour has improved considerably over recent years. Most pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning, but a minority do not. The school is usually calm and orderly, in lessons and at social times. However, to achieve a calm working environment, too many pupils are removed from lessons by leaders.

Pupils are safe and well cared for. Staff deal with bullying effectively. Pupils have increasing confidence in staff to support them when problems arise.

The school provides a good range of opportunities to develop pupils' interests and talents. Many pupils, especially those in lower years, enjoy school and are happy. Most pupils attend school regularly.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Following the school's last inspection, standards declined sharply. Behaviour deteriorated, attendance became a cause for concern and achievement declined. Over the last two years, leaders have arrested the decline and the school has improved in all areas. The principal and senior leaders lead with honesty and integrity. They are well supported by the Dudley Academies Trust (DAT). Staff value and appreciate the school's leaders. They are proud to work in the school and morale is good.

School leaders, supported by staff from DAT, have put in place effective curriculum plans in all subjects. These ensure that pupils' learning should build from year to year. These plans are being delivered well in some subjects, for example in iMedia and mathematics. In some other subjects, pupils are learning less well. For example, teachers do not routinely check pupils' understanding. They do not spot or address pupils' misconceptions. As a result, pupils do not remember what they have been taught.

The use of assessment is not always effective. Tests and other assessment activities do not always match curriculum content. Sometimes, pupils are tested on content they have not yet been taught. Consequently, assessment information is not as useful as it should be.

Leaders have in place strategies to support pupils who struggle with reading. Staff are seeking to broaden pupils' vocabulary and encourage a love of reading. Several of these strategies have been introduced only recently. Leaders have yet to develop an overarching strategy to promote reading. This work has been too slow.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. Teachers plan for their needs and teaching assistants provide helpful support in class. Pupils allocated to the school's autism spectrum disorder base usually learn with their peers in all subjects. Their learning shares the strengths and occasional weaknesses experienced by other pupils.

Leaders, supported by DAT, have tackled previous high levels of disruption to lessons. Classrooms are now typically places where pupils can learn and teachers can teach. However, this has been achieved at a cost. 'Supporting Expectations' (SE) is a room where pupils are placed, usually for five lessons, as a result of inappropriate behaviour. While in SE, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their actions. They complete work, although not necessarily the work they would have completed in class. The number of pupils placed in SE, although falling, is too high. Boys and disadvantaged pupils are over-represented in SE.

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is good. Careers education is thorough and well planned. The personal, social, health and economic education programme is comprehensive and delivered well. As COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, the school was quick to reinstate extra-curricular activities and off-site visits. These contribute well to pupils' broader development.

Trustees possess considerable expertise and provide effective support and challenge for leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that all staff have been well trained in safeguarding and that they understand their responsibility to keep pupils safe. As a result, staff are alert to the signs that pupils might need extra support. They pass on to leaders any concerns they have. Leaders deal with concerns appropriately, involving outside agencies when necessary. They ensure that pupils get the support they need.

Staff and most parents agree that pupils are safe in school. A small number of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online inspection questionnaire, expressed concerns about pupils' safety. Inspection evidence did not support these concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The delivery of the curriculum varies in quality between subjects and within subjects. This variability includes teachers' choice of pedagogy and their checking of pupils' understanding. Leaders' monitoring does not always identify these shortcomings. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is delivered well in all subjects.
- Assessment is not always used well. Tests and assessment tasks do not always tell staff what pupils have, and have not, learned and remembered. Information generated from such assessments is not always useful. Leaders should ensure that assessment is well focused on telling staff what pupils have, and have not, learned and remembered.
- The school's work to promote reading has not had a sufficiently high priority. Although plans and strategies are in place, they lack strategic oversight. Leaders should prioritise improving pupils' reading, especially those pupils whose reading inhibits their ability to be successful in their studies.
- Although improving, there remains too much inappropriate behaviour in school. This results in too many pupils being removed from their lessons and missing out on learning. Leaders should continue to improve behaviour in the school so that far fewer pupils have to be removed from lessons.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	137705
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10199563
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1045
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Lowell Williams
Principal	Sukhjot Dhani
Website	www.beaconhillacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 November 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined DAT in September 2017.
- The principal took up his post in May 2020.
- All the school's senior leaders have taken up their posts since the last inspection.
- The school does not make any use of alternative provision.
- The school has specially resourced provision for 10 pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. This is funded by the local authority.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the principal, and other senior leaders. They also met with four trustees, including the chair of the trust board and the chair of the local advisory committee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, languages, iMedia and business studies. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered safeguarding by meeting with designated safeguarding lead and other members of the safeguarding team, scrutinising policies and records relating to child protection and examining the safeguarding checks made on staff before they join the school.
- Inspectors considered responses from staff to their online inspection questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils at break time and lunchtime. They observed the school at these times.
- Inspectors considered responses to Parent View, including written responses.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alexander Laney	Her Majesty's Inspector
Helen Reeves	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Onyon	Ofsted Inspector

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