

# Inspection of a good school: Beacon Academy

North Beeches Road, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 2AS

---

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 December 2022

## Outcome

Beacon Academy continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Beacon is a welcoming school with a tangible community feel. Leaders encourage high-quality learning in this ambitious and successful academy. Pupils achieve very high standards. Many go on to top universities, apprenticeships or to prestigious careers, such as in the navy.

Pupils strive to 'make their MARK' (manners, acceptance, respect, kindness). These values are evident in the very strong relationships between teachers and pupils, and between pupils themselves. Pupils are very polite and courteous and welcome each other's differences. As one parent said: 'My daughter has only joined the school recently, but we love the inclusive, friendly and welcoming ethos.'

Leaders have very high expectations of behaviour and pupils live up to it. They show considerable respect and care towards each other. Bullying, if it happens, is quickly dealt with by the very committed student support team. Pupils feel safe and are rightfully proud to come to Beacon Academy.

Pupils benefit from a huge range of extra-curricular activities. Clubs include parkour, horticulture and drama. As one pupil said, 'There's a club for everything'. Many pupils relish taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and sixth formers enjoy mentoring younger pupils. Pupils are excited to be going on visits again, including the upcoming ski trip. They eagerly take on many leadership opportunities, such as becoming 'student ambassadors' who show visitors around the school.

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

The executive headteacher is a passionate leader with a clear vision for the school. She is supported by a very talented team of senior and middle leaders. Governors and trustees

bring a wealth of experience to their roles. There is a strong sense of working together, with staff frequently going the extra mile for their pupils. Staff are proud to work at Beacon. They value the trust that leaders place in them. Staff at all levels feel very well supported, including teachers in the early stages of their careers. They value the careful consideration that leaders always give to their well-being and workload.

Leaders have designed an ambitious and challenging curriculum. Key stage 3 is broad and balanced, providing a strong foundation for later study. Pupils have an exceptionally wide choice of subjects to choose from in key stage 4 and in the sixth form, such as engineering, psychology and politics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) follow the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Subject leaders have designed their courses with great care and skill. They have selected the most useful topics to study, and in the best order, so that pupils build their knowledge and skills securely. Pupils revisit key themes at a more advanced level as they make their way up the school.

Teachers are real experts in their field. They are skilled at helping pupils to develop their ideas. For example, in a Year 9 German lesson, pupils used their knowledge of time phrases, conjunctions and opinions to make simple sentences much more complex and interesting. Teachers use a range of strategies, such as modelling answers, to help pupils explore their work independently. This is especially helpful for pupils with SEND. Teachers expertly check what pupils know and how well they understand the work. They quickly identify misconceptions or gaps and correct them.

In lessons, pupils are eager and curious learners. In the sixth form, for example, they eagerly ask questions around the topic they are studying, either to extend discussions or to check their understanding. In key stages 3 and 4, pupils get to work quickly. This means that learning is business like and not often disrupted by any off-task behaviour. Pupils are easily able to articulate what they are learning and remember what they have learned, often from some time ago.

Staff know pupils very well. Many pupils with SEND make excellent strides forward because of the high-quality teaching in the classroom. Those that need extra help with handwriting, for example, receive it from specialist staff. All pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure. Those that need extra support with their reading are quickly identified. Specific programmes are in place, with trained professionals, to help them to catch up.

Leaders have designed a comprehensive programme to develop pupils' understanding of the world around them. Pupils learn how to stay safe and look after their well-being in personal development lessons, tutor time and assemblies. For example, pupils can confidently explain about mobile phone safety and alcohol misuse. They understand how to recognise extremist views. The programme is kept under constant review and often adapted to respond to issues that arise locally or nationally.

Careers education is a strength of the school. A carefully-thought-out programme begins in Year 7. Pupils in Year 11 go on work experience placements and benefit from one-to-one careers interviews. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are carefully guided

with their career decisions. Sixth-form students get a wealth of advice and support, which they greatly appreciate. This means pupils are very well prepared for their next steps.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders leave nothing to chance when it comes to safeguarding. Staff are trained to a high standard. The safeguarding team is extremely well organised, with highly efficient systems in place. Governors carefully oversee the school's safeguarding processes. Staff work closely with a wide range of outside support agencies to ensure that pupils quickly get the help that they need. In addition, the school benefits from the excellent support services of an on-site charity whose staff are very knowledgeable.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and value the help they get from the pastoral team. It is their first port of call if they need support with any emotional difficulties they may be experiencing.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2017.

## **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.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137982
<b>Local authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10211583
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1599
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	211
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Clare Collins
<b>Executive Headteacher</b>	Anna Robinson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.beacon-academy.org">www.beacon-academy.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	21 and 22 March 2017

## Information about this school

- Beacon Academy is part of the MARK Education Trust.
- The current executive headteacher was previously headteacher of the school. She took on her current role in September 2022 when a second secondary school joined the trust.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at two alternative education providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, senior leaders, staff, pupils, the chair of the governing body and two other governors. An inspector had a meeting with the chair of trustees and the executive headteacher. An inspector held a telephone discussion with an external adviser to the local authority. An inspector also had a telephone conversation with a member of staff at one alternative provider.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history, science, physical education and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also visited lessons in some other subjects.
- Through discussions with leaders, governors, trustees, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. They also viewed the school website and policies. They looked at records related to safeguarding, including checks on adults working at the school.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including early career teachers, about behaviour and their workload in school.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils and staff through the responses to Ofsted's confidential surveys. The views of parents were considered through the 291 parent responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

## Inspection team

Paula Sargent, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Yvonne Garvey

Ofsted Inspector

Chris Ellison

His Majesty's Inspector

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](mailto: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/](http://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](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

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 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022