

Inspection of a good school: The Beech Academy

Fairholme Drive, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG19 6DX

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 January 2023

Outcome

The Beech Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Beech Academy has an ethos that promotes hard work, enthusiasm and friendship, which threads through the school community. Staff skilfully use what they know about pupils to support them when they find aspects of life challenging. The vision at Beech Academy is based around 'turning I can't into I can'. Staff and pupils work hard to realise this vision together.

Staff nurture and encourage pupils throughout the school to learn and interact with each other well. Pupils develop empathy and are kind, polite and friendly. The school provides effective support for pupils who experience difficulty. Staff act quickly to prevent negative situations from escalating. Occasional disruption to learning is well managed, so pupils can concentrate on their studies. As a result, the school is a calm and purposeful place to learn, where bullying is rare and, when it occurs, is resolved by staff. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as they feel valued.

Staff are committed to helping pupils achieve as well as they can. The curriculum is well planned and adapted for each of the school's pathways, at Fairholme Drive and Westfield. Staff know pupils' needs and make sure that they take these into account when planning activities.

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

At Beech Academy, most pupils have communication and interaction needs, including a diagnosis of autism spectrum condition (ASC). Leaders make sure that the development of pupils' social and personal skills is a priority. Leaders have clear plans in place that enable them to provide appropriate support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Staff understand pupils' needs very well and meet their needs in the classroom. Pupils visit places beyond the classroom to develop their learning. For example, pupils visited

Chatsworth House to look at Nordic decorations. Pupils in the nurture provision used this as inspiration for their 'Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' inspired afternoon tea. Pupils made scones and read aloud poems that they had written about themes in the novel.

Leaders have developed clear curriculum plans, which are well sequenced. In some subjects, leaders have not set out the precise knowledge pupils should learn. This means that pupils do not achieve as well as they could in these subjects.

Teachers deliver lessons skilfully. Staff are passionate and well informed about supporting pupils with SEND. Teachers check pupils' progress through the curriculum well.

The curriculum presents many opportunities to learn beyond the classroom. Nevertheless, some pupils do not access a sufficiently broad range of enrichment activities that meet their wider learning needs. This prevents some pupils from developing their talents and interests as fully as they could.

Pupils who have not yet learned to read well continue to follow the school's phonics programme. Leaders keep a close eye on each pupil's progress. They make sure that extra support is in place for those pupils who are struggling to keep up. Pupils enjoy reading to the school's therapy dog, Millie. The progress made by pupils in reading makes a strong contribution to future adulthood and independence.

Pupils are very well prepared for the world beyond school through the school's 'steppingstones careers programme'. Pupils gain the knowledge, skills and qualifications that allow them to proceed with their next steps. Leaders ensure that these meet pupils' interests and aspirations. For example, pupils apply for 'jobs' in school. Leaders interview pupils for these roles. Pupils are then line managed in their jobs by senior staff. Staff discuss the progress made and the skills gained in their jobs with pupils. Pupils learn responsibility through this.

Students in the sixth form enjoy a curriculum that prepares them well for adulthood. They study academic courses and learn how to look after themselves so that they can be as independent as possible. Students complete work experience and undertake a 'safe and independent' travel programme. The school has strong links with a further special education provision.

The Trust and academy council are diligent in holding leaders to account for their actions. Staff feel that the school is well managed. Staff work together effectively so that pupils feel well looked after and receive a good-quality education. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school's leaders. Staff appreciate the training they receive to be effective in their roles. Staff highlighted that they welcomed support from leaders, particularly with matters relating to well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding of pupils is an absolute priority for all staff. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained, with frequent updates, so that they can identify if a child is at risk. Procedures to report concerns are clear, known and used by all staff. Teachers and leaders share information well. Leaders work very closely with external agencies and are persistent in ensuring that pupils get the help they need.

In personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, pupils learn successfully about keeping themselves safe. For example, pupils learn how to stay safe when using the internet.

Leaders are robust in ensuring that the checks made when staff are recruited are thorough.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not set out precisely the detailed knowledge pupils should learn. This means that pupils do not achieve as well as they could in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that a well-sequenced curriculum with the detailed knowledge pupils need to learn and that meets the needs of all pupils and enables them to succeed in each subject is in place across the school.
- Some pupils do not access a sufficiently broad range of enriching activities, which meet their wider learning needs, at lunchtime. This prevents some pupils from developing their talents and interests as fully as they could. Leaders should evaluate the range of enrichment opportunities that are on offer to pupils and seek to extend these further so that pupils' wider learning and development needs are met fully.

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 May 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

Unique reference number	140854
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10254962
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	14
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Child
Headteacher	Neil Davies
Website	http://www.beech.evolutrust.org
Date of previous inspection	23 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Beech Academy provides specialist support for pupils with ASC and moderate learning needs. Additionally, many pupils with SEND require additional support in relation to social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils attending the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The school joined the Nexus multi-academy trust in September 2022.
- The school has a second, smaller site at Westfield, about one mile away from the main school, which offers nurture provision.
- The school makes use of two alternative education providers. One of these is unregistered.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding is above the national figure.

- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders, class teachers and support staff. Inspectors also met with the CEO and trust members and met with the chair of the academy committee.
- Inspectors met with those responsible for safeguarding at the school. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding. They spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at the start and end of the day, during lessons and at break. They spoke to pupils about bullying and leaders' expectations of pupils' behaviour.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives in English, early reading, science and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, reviewed curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including school improvement documentation.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who responded to the confidential questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. They evaluated the views of staff and pupils from the Ofsted online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Anne Maingay, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sue Wood

Ofsted Inspector

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