

# Inspection of Alternative Education Service - The Beacon Centre

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

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Inspection dates: 28 and 29 March 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Staff at the Beacon Centre make a difference to pupils' lives. Pupils receive care, guidance and support that improve their life chances. Pupils who attend this school often have difficult previous school experiences, or have significant challenges in their lives. Staff understand this and have created a positive, supportive environment where pupils do well.

Pupils appreciate the time that staff take to listen to them. This makes them feel valued. There are adults to talk to if pupils have any worries. Pupils feel safe, both emotionally and physically. Bullying is not a problem at this school. Pupils get along well with each other and receive strong pastoral support from staff. Pupils are respectful and tolerant of each other.

Some pupils find behaviour a challenge. Staff understand this and teach pupils strategies to manage their own emotions. Inappropriate behaviour is sensitively managed with firm, but fair, rules and boundaries. Pupils understand the school rules and feel that everyone is treated equally.

To support pupils' development of life skills, the secondary school site has a fully functioning shop and salon. These give pupils the opportunities to prepare for adulthood as well as acquiring specific job-related skills.

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

Leaders have made significant improvements to the curriculum. They have also addressed the historic poor behaviour of pupils. As a result, there is now a calm, happy environment across the primary and secondary sites. Senior leaders model how they want pupils to be treated and staff follow their lead.

Many of the pupils on roll have been permanently excluded or have missed significant time in formal education. Dependent on need, pupils can attend the school for weeks, months or years. Pupils are assessed as soon as they join the school. Teachers then plan individually for each pupil, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes teaching knowledge to backfill gaps, or continuing with a curriculum that prepares pupils for when they return to a mainstream school.

At key stage 4, pupils study towards a range of qualifications, tailored to their needs. Pupils in key stage 3 and 4 also take part in weekly work placements. Pupils appreciate the opportunities that they are given. A pupil commented, 'The support and guidance I have received now means I have a career plan when I leave school.' Leaders provide extensive support for pupils and families where attendance is more of a challenge. Most pupils attend the primary school regularly, but less so at the secondary school. As a result, some pupils in secondary miss too much of the curriculum, leading to gaps in knowledge.

Leaders in the primary school have introduced an early reading programme that helps pupils learn and apply letter sounds. To help with focus and attention, pupils have their phonics sessions in small groups or individually where required. Staff teach letter sounds precisely. They model reading words with clear pronunciation. Books that pupils read are accurately matched to their knowledge so pupils can practise reading words with the sounds they are learning. Pupils in primary achieve well with reading. In the secondary school, to ensure that pupils still receive the technical support they require with reading, staff blend phonics into English lessons. However, many pupils struggle to read with fluency, expression and appropriate pace. As a result, some pupils in key stage 3 and 4 have a negative attitude to rewards reading.

Pupils' personal development is a vital thread that is woven into the curriculum. Leaders have carefully organised what needs to be taught to develop pupils' understanding of diversity, healthy relationships and how to stay safe. Leaders make sure that pupils receive opportunities such as weekly swimming in the primary school, a six-week climbing course, surfing lessons for the whole school and weekly physical education lessons.

Governance of the school is a strength. Knowledgeable governors hold leaders to account and have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. School leaders and governors share the same vision for pupils. They work effectively as a team and make sure that staff are supported with appropriate training. Staff enjoy working at the school and feel well supported by leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders work with a range of agencies, including the police, health and social care. To ensure that no vital information is missed, leaders have designed comprehensive record-keeping systems. Leaders keep meticulous pupil records and analyse this information weekly. The designated safeguarding lead makes sure that all staff have detailed information to help support and protect pupils. When information is received from external agencies, immediate action is taken to provide practical and emotional support. The personal, social and health education curriculum has been appropriately adapted to meet the additional vulnerabilities that many pupils face. The curriculum explicitly teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe and prepare for life in adulthood.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Pupils in the secondary school with low attendance are falling behind in the curriculum. Pupils are missing out on vital knowledge acquisition in a range of

subjects and are not given the opportunity to catch up. Leaders should continue to work with individuals and families to improve attendance. Leaders should also identify the non-negotiable knowledge that all pupils need to study in each subject and make sure time is provided for them to catch up.

- The reading curriculum in the secondary school does not meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils are not developing a secure bank of reading knowledge and skills to become fluent, confident readers. As a result, some pupils are disengaged and disinterested in reading. Leaders should prioritise reading and develop a positive culture for reading in key stage 3 and 4.

## 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>	108666
<b>Local authority</b>	South Tyneside
<b>Inspection number</b>	10255738
<b>Type of school</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>School category</b>	Pupil referral unit
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	79
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Louise Pippin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dominick Gray
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thebeaconcentre.net">www.thebeaconcentre.net</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 and 9 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school does not currently have any Reception Year children on roll.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school caters for pupils who have been permanently excluded or have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The number of pupils on roll in the secondary school has significantly increased in the last 12 months.
- Pupils in key stage 4 take part in work placements for up to three days a week.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the 2020-21 COVID-19 pandemic. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors did deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and citizenship. Inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum and met with teachers from the lessons visited. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils about the curriculum, behaviour and what it is like to attend this school.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum documents from a range of subjects.
- Inspectors listened to a range of pupils read from different year groups.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at the single central record and spoke to leaders, teachers, governors and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors considered the responses made by parents via free-text responses.

### **Inspection team**

David Milligan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sarah Birch

Ofsted Inspector

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