

# Inspection of a good school: Beecroft Academy

Westfield Road, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 1DW

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Inspection dates:

24 and 25 and 30 January 2023

## Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at Beecroft School. They enjoy their learning and the wider opportunities that are on offer. These include a range of clubs, visitors and trips. However, pupils are not experiencing a well-planned curriculum. This is having an impact on pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), being ready for their next stage of education.

The majority of pupils say they feel safe. Pupils say that bullying does happen, but the situation is getting better. Pupils know who they should talk to if they are affected.

Pupils generally behave well in class and meet the expectations of their teachers. However, there is a significant minority of pupils who cause disruption to other pupils' learning and play. Most pupils want to do well and are motivated by events such as celebration assemblies.

Members of the pupil leadership team take pride in their roles. They plan events, help to shape decisions and support other pupils to do the right thing. Pupils learn about financial planning as part of their wider curriculum. This contributes towards preparing them for the future.

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

There have been significant leadership changes since the previous inspection. This has affected the consistency of the work that has been done, particularly to ensure that the curriculum meets pupils' needs. More recently, the newly formed leadership team has acted swiftly to address this. Leaders have reviewed the curriculum and started to make considerable changes to it. Although leaders are more confident in the curriculum they

are implementing, they acknowledge that there is work to do to develop and improve it further.

The quality of education across the school is variable, including in the early years. This is because most curriculum plans are still being developed. At the time of the inspection, leaders were in the process of mapping out the vital knowledge they want pupils to learn. Therefore, the expectations of what knowledge should be taught and how to teach it are not currently clear for teachers. This has resulted in pupils having gaps in their learning and falling behind.

Leaders have started to review how teachers accurately know what pupils have learned. Teachers are developing a consistent approach to addressing misconceptions and checking what pupils have learned. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge are often not picked up quickly enough. Consequently, pupils do not achieve as well as they should in all curriculum areas.

Leaders have recently introduced a new phonics programme, which staff in early years and key stage 1 deliver increasingly well. This is improving pupils' ability to read. However, too many pupils are too far behind when they start. The planned work that is delivered to these pupils does not address their gaps in reading knowledge well enough to help them catch up quickly enough.

There is a significant proportion of pupils with SEND at the school. Many of these pupils are not able to read and write independently. Most pupils with SEND are accessing the same curriculum as their peers. However, there is variation in the expectations and quality of the support for pupils with SEND. Consequently, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they should.

Leaders analyse patterns in behaviour and attendance. Where needed, leaders access external support for pupils with complex behavioural needs. Leaders have very recently implemented a new system to make sure that pupils affected by negative behaviour or perceived bullying feel safe and supported.

Persistent absence is high. A significant proportion of pupils are missing school frequently. Leaders have put systems in place to address this. However, these are recently established, and persistent absence has not improved.

The extra-curricular opportunities have been well considered by leaders to provide pupils with a range of experiences to develop their skills and talents. Equal opportunity is given to all. Pupils benefit from the sporting and musical experiences on offer, including local competitions and trips to London.

Most staff enjoy working at the school. They feel well supported with their workload and well-being.

There have been changes to the governing body. Recent external support is developing governors' knowledge and understanding of their roles. This work is in its infancy, but it is

starting to ensure that governors check for themselves what is happening and hold leaders better to account for improving the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Although pupils are safe, leaders have not been as rigorous with recording as they need to be to ensure that they are fully assured that their work to safeguard pupils is consistently effective. Leaders have recently accessed external safeguarding audit and leadership support. Leaders have been quick to take action once areas to improve are identified. This is resulting in improvements to the oversight of safeguarding by all, including governors.

Staff have received training. They know what signs to look out for and record concerns, however small. Leaders follow up concerns and liaise with outside agencies as needed.

Pupils are taught to stay safe, including online safety. They understand respectful relationships. They make use of the 'care boxes' and talk to adults if something is worrying them.

All relevant checks on adults working in school are in place.

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

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

- Although pupils are safe, leaders and those responsible for governance have not prioritised the necessary checks on behaviour and safeguarding. The new systems that have been put in place need to be closely monitored to ensure that leaders are fully assured that actions are robust, timely and effective in safeguarding pupils.
- The curriculum for pupils, including those in the early years, has not been fully considered in terms of what knowledge pupils should learn. This means that some areas of the curriculum are not being learned sufficiently well by pupils. Leaders must review the curriculum to ensure that all curriculum plans build on and include clearly defined content and skills that lead to ambitious end points. Leaders must provide subsequent training to ensure that all staff know what leaders expect and are helped to develop their knowledge so they know how to best deliver the curriculum well.
- There is inconsistency in the support for pupils who are struggling to learn to read and for those pupils with SEND. As a result, too many pupils are not catching up or achieving as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that their monitoring of this provision addresses where provision is not suited to pupils' needs in an effective manner. Leaders must ensure that staff receive training so that there are

high expectations and appropriate support for all pupils who are identified as needing extra help so that they achieve well in their learning.

- The number of pupils who are persistently absent is too high. While systems to address this have been put in place, these are recently implemented. Therefore, these pupils are still not in school as regularly as they should be. Leaders must review the support plans that are in place and ensure that these include achievable targets that result in swiftly improving attendance.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140276
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10287346
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy Converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	411
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Hannah Bell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Hughes
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.beecroftacademy.co.uk">www.beecroftacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23 and 24 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The headteacher and the senior leadership team were appointed in April 2022.
- There have been considerable changes to leadership, including the governing body, since the previous inspection.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.
- The school operates a breakfast and after-school provision for pupils at the school.
- Leaders operate a school holiday club for disadvantaged pupils who attend Beecroft and other schools. This is commissioned by the local authority.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspection took place on 30 January 2023, following an earlier visit on 24 and 25 January 2023, and took account of some evidence from that earlier visit.

- 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the two assistant headteachers. They also met with the chief executive officer of the Pyramid Schools Trust, who has been working with leaders, the school improvement adviser and the special educational needs advisory teacher from the local authority.
- Meetings were also held with three members of the governing board, including the chairperson.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, religious education, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. As part of the reading deep dive, the lead inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the early years and the curriculum in some other subjects. An inspector observed a celebration assembly.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leads and scrutinised the single central register and safeguarding records.
- The lead inspector visited the breakfast club provision and met with members of the school leadership team.
- During the inspection, inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils at lunchtime and before the start of the school day. The inspector spoke to pupils, staff, and parents/carers during these times.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including school and curriculum development plans, self-evaluation plans, behaviour records and governing board minutes.
- The inspector considered the 38 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the 34 free-text comments received during the inspection. The inspector also took account of the 30 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and the 56 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

## **Inspection team**

Isabel Davis, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sara Boyce	His Majesty's Inspector
Wendy Varney	His Majesty's Inspector
Chris Stainsby	His Majesty's Inspector

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