

Inspection of The Beacon College

Eastnor Drive, Hereford, Herefordshire HR1 1NZ

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 April 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

The executive headteacher of this school is Lisa Appleton, who is also the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust. This school is part of the Accordia Academies Trust, which means other people have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the CEO and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Trevor Gregory. The executive headteacher is also responsible for one other school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Students thrive at The Beacon College. Staff make sure that they understand each student incredibly well. This means that from the moment they start, students' needs are met and they are able to flourish.

Students' personal development is the golden thread that runs through all aspects of school life. Staff work thoughtfully to make sure that students are very well prepared for adulthood in every respect. The exceptionally well designed curriculum, the extensive range of wider opportunities and the carefully planned experiences for students to practise and apply their skills provide an excellent platform for students' next steps.

Students enjoy school. There is a strong focus on teaching students to be able to advocate for themselves. Students are taught to make choices for themselves and to be able to communicate effectively when they want things to change. Students' views are at the heart of their provision. The school has precisely planned what they do so to ensure that students make meaningful choices in all areas of school life. As a result, students are confident that their voices are listened to.

The school has exceptionally high expectations for students, and staff provide students with the tools to meet these expectations. Students learn about themselves and the needs of others, so they are well prepared for employment, education or more specialist provision.

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

Leaders let nothing stand in the way of providing the best quality education for students. All areas of provision are meticulously planned so that nothing is left to chance. Students practise and apply their knowledge and skills across all areas of their provision. Every learning activity is meaningful and highly focused on preparing each individual student for adulthood.

The rigorous curriculum is precisely matched to each student to make sure that they have the academic skills and knowledge they need to be successful in the future. Students learn English and mathematics through a curriculum that is focused on providing students with the opportunities to learn about activities or workplaces that they may access in the future. Highly expert staff support students in learning the curriculum well. Some students use communication tools and staff make sure that all students contribute fully to lessons. Meticulous curriculum planning means that everything that students learn is applied in a real-life setting. Educational visits and work experience are used to complement and build on classroom learning.

Students at the earliest stages of reading continue to be taught to read using an appropriate phonics programme. More confident readers enjoy choosing from a wide range of reading materials. Students are encouraged to read widely and some students choose to spend quiet time in the well-stocked book corner.

Students learn about the wider world through the bespoke personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum that is designed to support their individual pathway to adulthood. For example, students learn about financial management. For some students being prepared for independent living, this includes a visit to the estate agent's to look at rental properties and to learn to budget. For other students, this may involve learning how to buy things in a shop. Students are taught how to keep themselves safe and about healthy relationships. The PSHE curriculum is well supported by experts. Those students who need more help understanding themselves and their bodies receive highly focused sessions from relevant agencies. The highly effective PSHE programme ensures that all students can take their next steps with confidence.

Students have many opportunities to develop their talents and interests. They take part in an extensive range of activities designed to support them in adulthood. These activities, too, are uniquely tailored to students' needs, talents and ambitions. Careers education is a real strength. Students learn about workplaces, further education and about the community activities they may access in adulthood. Nearly all students participate in regular work experience, where they learn skills for work as well as for life.

Trustees are highly effective. They are highly ambitious for students and carefully target their work so that the school provides the best quality education. The headteacher is an exceptional role model and staff appreciate the support they get from leaders. This shared vision and practice of all staff provides students with an exceptional education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the

school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	148636
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	10294729
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	16 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Trevor Gregory
Headteacher	Lisa Appleton, Executive Headteacher
Website	https://www.thebeaconcollege.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school opened in September 2021 as a special free school.
- The school is for students aged 16 to 19. All students have an education, health and care plan.
- The primary needs of students at the school are severe and complex needs, autism and moderate learning difficulties.
- The school is part of the Accordia Academies Trust.
- There is an interim head of college in post.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: functional skills, physical development and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the head of college and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with the leader of careers and the leader of work experience.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed school documentation.
- Inspectors met with a group of trustees, including the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils at social times and in formal meetings. Inspectors reviewed the results of the online pupil survey.
- Inspectors met with staff and took account of the online staff survey.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Claire Price, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Pete Hines OBE

Ofsted Inspector

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