

Inspection of Beacon Academy

North Beeches Road, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 2AS

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
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Keith Slattery. This school is part of MARK Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the executive headteacher, Anna Robinson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Clare Collins.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils succeed in living up to this school's high ambitions for them. They become motivated, articulate, resilient and knowledgeable, as the school intends. Disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are no exception to this. Last year's GCSE examination outcomes reflect the strength of pupils' exceptional achievement. Pupils enjoy varied and enriching opportunities. For example, as well as the extensive clubs programme, pupils who want to follow particular interests are supported to form their own groups.

Students in the sixth form enjoy the independence of their own campus. They serve as leaders and role models within the school. For example, sixth-form students mentor pupils in key stage 4 to help them through their examinations. Strong achievement across a range of courses enables Year 13 leavers to go on to an array of exciting destinations.

Pupils are polite and respectful towards each other and with staff. Their behaviour contributes to the culture of learning in classes. Pupils know that the student support team are there to support them if they need. The 'Beyond Beacon' programme helps pupils to value and celebrate difference. As a result, the school is a welcoming environment for new arrivals, including those joining from overseas.

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

Pupils' success is rooted in the curriculum, which challenges them to excel. Teachers sequence learning carefully, so that each step is achievable for pupils. They model and demonstrate key words, so pupils develop their subject vocabulary extensively. Revisiting important concepts over time helps pupils to develop a deep understanding. In geography, for instance, pupils analyse and create maps of increasing sophistication over the course of key stage 3. Teachers select tasks and pose questions that prompt pupils to think in detail. By the time they reach the sixth form, this enables students to debate and evaluate complex ideas. For example, in languages, students discuss the features and merits of different architectural styles. Sixth form published outcomes represent high standards of achievement across the fully inclusive student cohort.

The school's use of assessment gives real clarity about what pupils know and can do. This helps teachers to select what to emphasise in subsequent lessons. As a result, gaps in pupils' learning are closed systematically. Teachers understand how to help pupils with SEND to achieve their best. This enables staff to adapt explanations or questions in class, and to provide additional targeted input when needed. The school provides highly effective support for weaker readers. This includes pupils who speak English as an additional language. These pupils benefit from specialist teaching that builds their fluency and confidence. This ensures that literacy is not a barrier to their learning.

Attendance is at the forefront of the school's priorities. As with schools nationally, pupil absence remains higher than before the pandemic. Leaders here have a firm grasp of this issue. They understand the semi-rural context of their pupils and families. The school is taking a strategic approach to new ways of supporting attendance. They also make thoughtful use of alternative provision both within the school, and externally where appropriate. These approaches are proving to be effective in reducing absence. In lessons, pupils are highly engaged. They are proud of their achievements, and resilient in the face of challenges.

The school makes sure that pupils of all ages learn about mental health and similar important issues. The 'religion and world views' curriculum enables pupils to explore a breadth of perspectives and philosophies. Careers guidance is detailed and informative. Sixth-form students welcome the chance to learn about personal finance, in readiness for the next stage in life. Pupils of all ages develop confidence and interpersonal skills through leadership opportunities. They are proud to take on roles as sports leaders, librarians or student ambassadors.

Leaders make every effort to make sure that staff workload is manageable. The school's feedback policy, for example, ensures that pupils receive helpful guidance without being burdensome for teachers. Staff benefit from extensive professional learning. This enables the school to develop 'expert teachers' in each subject. Consequently, all pupils benefit from the school's consistent and rigorous approach to teaching.

The school plays a central role within the local community. Leaders are determined that every pupil can succeed here, regardless of what challenges they face. Governors and trustees share this commitment, and help to shape the school's strategy accordingly. As a result, pupils' best interests are at the heart of every decision at this school.

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	137982
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10296372
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1625
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	265
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Clare Collins
CEO of the trust	Anna Robinson (Executive Headteacher)
Headteacher	Keith Slattery
Website	www.beacon-academy.org
Dates of previous inspection	7 and 8 December 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Beacon Academy is part of MARK Education Trust.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider and two unregistered alternative providers.
- 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 education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, including the headteacher and senior leaders. The inspectors also met representatives from the local governing board and the board of trustees, and with the executive headteacher of the trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages and geography. 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. The inspectors also discussed the curriculum and provision for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, governors, staff, parents and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts the pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Daniel Botting, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jo Brinkley	His Majesty's Inspector
Phillip Blagg	His Majesty's Inspector
Michelle Payne	His Majesty's Inspector
Clive Close	His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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