

# Inspection of an outstanding school: The Beacon Folkestone

Park Farm Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5DN

---

Inspection dates: 5 to 6 June 2024

## Outcome

The Beacon Folkestone continues to be an outstanding school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

All pupils at The Beacon Folkestone are exceptionally well cared for and supported. Staff have a deep understanding of each child's special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including their communication needs. Pupils say that staff take very good care of them. Those pupils who do not express themselves verbally are able to use their communication systems to express their preferences, and to communicate when they need help. Staff are consistently attentive and responsive to the needs of all pupils.

Pupils achieve exceptionally well because the school ensures that all staff are expert in how to best support them to learn and thrive. Each pupil's curriculum is planned extremely carefully to enable them to access learning, and the wider life of the school, in a way that works for them. Staff know exactly what each pupil's next step is and utilise every available opportunity to help pupils make progress. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that the teaching and support the school provides helps them to learn in an enjoyable way, but also helps them in their wider lives.

Pupils are polite and consistently well mannered. Pupils greet visitors with enthusiasm. They are proud of their school and want to share their positive experiences. Pupils particularly enjoy the trips and visits the school provides. For example, pupils enjoyed a 'bouldering' trip, where they were able to climb harness-free. The school is very ambitious for every pupil, and pupils learn that if they work hard, they can achieve well now and in the future. The school ensures that no pupil feels limited by their SEND.

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

The school's curriculum for all pupils is driven by its ambition for pupils' futures. Right from the start of early years, the curriculum has been designed to develop children's independence and to prepare them for life beyond The Beacon. Staff in early years have expert understanding of child development, and of the early years foundation stage. They ensure that every child's curriculum is underpinned by their education, health and care (EHC) plan, and that the next step for each child is precisely what will make the biggest

difference to their learning, or their ability to access learning. Every opportunity is utilised to help children make progress towards their targets.

Some pupils will continue to work on a curriculum that is heavily underpinned by their EHC plan throughout their time at school. The school ensures that the curriculum for these pupils is enriching and engaging, but consistently supports pupils in achieving the ambitious and relevant targets set for them. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties delight in their music lessons and are able to develop their attention and engagement. Additionally, staff ensure that each pupil continues to work on their own targets. For example, within music, a pupil might be supported to develop strength on a particular side of their body, so that in the future, they will be able to propel their wheelchair independently.

Many pupils reach a developmental stage that enables them to begin to learn to read. The school has introduced a very clear phonics programme. All staff are trained in the teaching of early reading. Pupils receive careful instruction to ensure that they learn the sounds that letters make. As they progress through the phonics programme, the school ensures that pupils have ongoing opportunities to practise their reading so that, over time, they become increasingly confident and fluent readers. Pupils' engagement with, and love of, reading is promoted from the start of early years, where children are immersed in stories, rhymes and poems. Children who are not able to learn to read continue to benefit from enthusing sensory storytelling, and ongoing exposure to songs and music.

The school ensures that those pupils who are able study a broad range of academic subjects. The school's academic curriculum has been very carefully planned, with small steps of learning set out clearly. Older pupils, and students in the sixth form, are taught by subject specialist teachers. Teachers have a very clear understanding of the small steps of learning that pupils need to take in order to achieve the best possible academic outcomes. Teachers explain and model learning precisely to support all pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding.

Staff provide excellent support for pupils' social, emotional and mental health, including when these are very complex needs, interlinked with their autism. The programme for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education is well considered and appropriate to pupils' needs and stages of development. Through the school's wider development programme, pupils are supported to identify and develop their talents and interests, so that their lives are enriched. In a number of subjects, the curriculum has been developed to support pupils for whom independent living is appropriate. For example, through the curriculum for mathematics, pupils learn about their personal finances and budgeting. All pupils work towards greater independence in a way that is appropriate for them.

The school has a very clear careers programme, through which pupils are supported to understand routes into paid, voluntary and supported employment. Pupils have ongoing opportunities to prepare for employment. For example, the school runs an annual festival for pupils and their families, 'Beaconfest'. This gives pupils the experience of attending a festival, in a supportive and accessible location with expert staff supporting. In addition,

pupils get valuable work experience by running stalls. Consequently, the school realises its ambition for every pupil to leave the school with a clear onward pathway.

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, appreciate the belief that staff have in them. Pupils work hard in their lessons because they value what they are taught and recognise the positive impact it has on their lives. Some pupils require a highly specialist approach to support them to manage within a school environment. The school has an expert team which supports this group of pupils. As a result of the support they receive with behaviour, these pupils have been able to engage with education for the first time. Most pupils attend very well because they enjoy school and all that it offers them. Some pupils have medical conditions that make it harder for them to attend regularly. Staff work sensitively with these pupils and their families. Where the school feels that a pupil could attend more regularly, it takes effective action to promote better attendance.

Leaders work very carefully to support staff with their workload and well-being. The school recognises that, until recently, staff absence has negatively impacted on the work-life balance of some other staff. The school has now taken effective action to address this issue. The school has also taken prompt action to ensure that, as the complexity of their pupil population increases, staff have the expertise they need to be able to understand and meet these pupils' needs, including in relation to behaviour.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 second ungraded inspection since we the school to be outstanding in February 2019.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	119044
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10321858
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Foundation special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	419
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	57
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Alison Youd and Nicola Webster-Hart (Co-Chairs)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ady Young
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thebeacon.kent.sch.uk">www.thebeacon.kent.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11 February 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The executive headteacher was previously the head of school. He became the executive headteacher in August 2020.
- The co-chairs of the governing board were appointed in September 2023.
- The main school is located in Folkestone. The school operates two additional sites. The larger additional site is located at Beacon Walmer, Salisbury Road, Walmer CT14 7QJ. There are currently 45 pupils who learn at this site. There are plans in place to expand this site from September 2025. The school also operates a satellite class located within Castle Hill Community Primary School, Sydney Street, Folkestone CT19 6HG. Eight pupils currently attend the satellite class.
- All pupils on roll at The Beacon Folkestone have an EHC plan. The school supports pupils with additional and profound, severe and complex needs. Many pupils have a diagnosis of autism and/or speech, language and communication needs.

- 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.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- 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 met with the executive headteacher and the wider leadership team. The lead inspector met with representatives of the school's governing board, including the co-chairs of the board, and spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and interaction in early reading, mathematics, the curriculum for pupils' social, emotional and mental health 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. The school's early years and sixth form was considered within the deep dives. Inspectors discussed the curriculum for early years and the sixth form with leaders.
- Inspectors considered pupils' behaviour and attitudes throughout the inspection and discussed the school's analysis of pupils' behaviour and attendance with leaders.
- Inspectors considered personal development through all deep dives. They met with leaders to discuss the school's personal development programme, including the curriculum for PSHE and relationships education. Inspectors talked to pupils about PSHE and other aspects of the school's personal development programme.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.

## Inspection team

Alice Roberts, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lesley Fisher-Pink

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2024