

Beacon Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114585
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	338410
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1611
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	392
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	G Rumble
Headteacher	Peter Swan
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2007
School address	East Beeches Road Crowborough TN6 2AS
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. Approximately 80 per cent of the time was spent looking at pupils' learning. Inspectors visited 32 lessons and observed 32 teachers, an assembly, tutor groups, and break and lunchtime. They held meetings with governors, staff, and students, inspectors did not meet with any parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at plans and policies, records of assessments and the tracking of students' progress and safeguarding documents. The provision and planning for pupils who are vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities were also evaluated. In addition, 144 parental questionnaires, 101 staff questionnaires and 255 student questionnaires were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the rates of progress being made by higher attaining students, especially in Key Stage 3 and 4 in English and mathematics, and whether teaching is sufficiently challenging
- how well teachers convey high expectations, provide quality guidance in marking and use assessment data to inform their teaching
- the effectiveness of senior and middle leaders in bringing about improvement since the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Beacon Community College is larger than average and currently has more boys than girls. Students are from mainly White British backgrounds and most speak English as a first language. The proportion of students with special needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most of these have social, emotional and behavioural needs, specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, or moderate learning difficulties. Beacon is a recognised training college with specialist sports status and has recently gained specialist status in science. The college is on two sites and has a partnership agreement to run a third site with three other community colleges and a Further Education college. The third site is a vocational skills development centre in Uckfield, East Sussex. The college works in partnership with a special school, and students share both the site and learning activities. It is also an extended college working in partnership with the community.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Beacon Community College is a good school. Provision and performance in the sixth form are also good. Several important aspects of the school's work are outstanding, most notably an innovative curriculum that provides excellent learning opportunities for students and the excellent care, guidance and support they receive throughout their college life. Excellent partnerships, especially with the on-site special school, extended services, other professionals and the impact of the specialisms, strengthen provision further. Student attainment in national examinations has risen significantly over the last three years to above average. Students, including those who are higher attaining, make good progress because teaching is mostly good. While there are a few lessons that are inspirational and highly motivating, thereby ensuring rapid progress, not all are of this quality. Tasks and activities are not always closely matched to the needs of individuals. Teachers increasingly use assessment to plan learning, but marking and the dialogue between teachers and students vary in quality. Most students know their targets, but are not always clear how to achieve them. Though some excellent practices are evident in sport, there is still more work to do to improve assessment practices and to ensure students know and understand how to improve their work to achieve exceptional progress in all subjects.

The focus, as one governor said, 'to make this the first school of choice in the local area', has driven improvement. The principal's outstanding leadership skills and excellent governance unite all in this deeply rooted and shared ambition and drive. Rigorous self-evaluation and established whole-school monitoring systems ensure staff know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. For example, middle and senior leaders carefully monitor and evaluate teaching and learning but their skills are not yet sufficiently refined to move more teaching to become outstanding. Good leadership and management at all levels ensure that significant improvements have not been diluted during a substantial building programme to vastly improve the environment and education for all. These factors, leadership's determination and Beacon's track record of improvement provide compelling evidence for an outstanding capacity to improve. Two parental views represent many: 'at Beacon my child flourished academically and socially' and 'there is just so much on offer.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and so improve the progress students make in lessons by:
 - ensuring teaching inspires and motivates students so that they make

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exceptional progress

- implementing tasks and activities that are matched more closely to the needs of individuals
- refining middle and senior leaders' skills in their monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning so they can identify and develop outstanding practice across the school.
- Build on assessment in all subjects to raise students' standards by:
 - extending the excellence seen in assessment in specialist subjects to all
 - checking that marking and the dialogue between teachers and students are of consistently high quality so that students are clear about how to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

GCSE results, including those in English and mathematics and for most other subjects are above average. Ongoing improvement is seen in the majority of subjects and especially in the school's specialist subjects of sport and science. Students work enthusiastically, whether investigating mathematical probabilities in Year 9, or learning how to order a meal in Spanish in Year 11. Achievement is good for all students. Girls and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress significantly better than those nationally in their learning. Boys of all abilities also make good progress. Their enjoyment of school is seen in their improved attendance, though a few persistent non-attendees are proving hard to encourage.

Students show good social and collaborative skills. During the disruptions caused by snow and around school, their behaviour was considerate, especially when negotiating congested areas. Students say they feel exceptionally safe at school, especially those who are vulnerable. High numbers participate in enrichment activities, from performing arts to leadership groups. The Caf $\square\square$ Beech's healthy breakfast and lunch menus are popular and a high take-up of sporting activities helps students to be healthy. Though the school council is not yet as effective as it could be, students contribute well to their own and the wider communities as associate governors, and on environmental and charity projects. Younger ones regularly help in the special school and, as learning leaders, teach small groups of primary children. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is heightened through 'deep learning days devoted to community and global issues and in studies of ethics and philosophy for all in Years 10 and 11.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' expectations and strong subject knowledge effectively guide learning and help students to progress at good rates. While planning shows a range of activities to match students' needs, in practice there is not always sufficient range to challenge the higher attainers and support those who struggle to learn. New technology is used well and students are encouraged to be confident in expressing their views. Much teaching observed was good, but very little was outstanding or inspirational and students rarely excelled in their learning. Students in Years 7 to 9 are skilled at using peer- and self-assessment. This is well developed in sport but is at the early stages in other subjects.

The extensive and innovative curriculum has an outstanding range and mix of GCSEs, BTEC Firsts, Diploma, National Vocational Qualifications, Young Apprenticeship and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses. The impact is seen in the rising results, improved student behaviour, attendance and retention rates. Beacon's own vocational skills centre has increased uptake significantly and includes opportunities from Year 9 taster to sixth form courses. Gifted and talented students are fast tracked in modern foreign languages and triple science, and attend critical thinking and 'master' classes. Joint courses with the special school support those with additional needs, promoting excellent inclusion. Enrichment from international links and enterprise projects significantly enhance the curriculum. Right from transition in Year 6 to preparation for university, further training and/or employment, students receive very well targeted support. Vulnerable and lower attaining students have a personalised curriculum and excellent additional support. Intensive work with those facing

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challenging circumstances and the team in the Phoenix centre (inclusion unit) ensures 'catch up' for those who miss out on work. 'Clued Up', a one-stop shop in the high street, provides good support for students at weekends and during school holidays. Excellent pastoral care, tracking and monitoring and strong partnerships with parents and multi-agencies are deeply embedded features. These, and the well-developed personal, social, citizenship and health education programme, lead to a culture where achievement is valued by all.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The principal is an inspirational leader. Supported by outstanding governance, he has harnessed significant improvement since the previous inspection. Leaders at all levels, including those new to their roles, are developing good leadership and management skills. They share the drive to achieve ambitious targets. Rigorous monitoring and self-evaluation that includes the school's significant partners is exceptionally well focused on priorities, as are actions taken to remedy any weaknesses. Consequently, outcomes for students are good, but are not yet high. There is more to do to drive up the quality of teaching and learning and to refine the monitoring skills of senior and middle leaders. The proactive governors use their considerable expertise to develop new initiatives, and challenge and steer the school. Procedures for safeguarding are robust, as are those for promoting equal opportunities and tackling any discrimination. Beacon is rightly proud of its promotion of community cohesion, which is outstanding. It has an excellent understanding of local needs, and community outreach is extensive. Established and extensive links ensure students have a wide understanding of life in Britain today and globally.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Good provision ensures that students achieve well across a range of subjects. Attainment at A2 level led to a slight decline to average but was offset by well above average attainment at AS level and BTEC. Generally results reflect a significant improvement over recent years. This is a direct result of the extensive curriculum and good teaching that ensure students are very well prepared for the next stage of training, education or employment. Students receive excellent advice and guidance and applications made, including to Oxbridge, enabled over half of the students in 2009 to gain entry to university. Almost all others went into further training or employment. Leadership and management are good and the relocation of the sixth form has improved facilities and increased student numbers and retention rates. Students respond with excellent behaviour and work hard, but the punctuality of a small minority is an issue. Students enjoy, and are active in, arranging activities from music festivals to the sixth form prom. Many are involved in community projects related to sports leadership awards and international links.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Responses from the small proportion of parents who completed questionnaires were mostly positive. Many parents made very appreciative comments about the leadership and management of the school and nearly all aspects of the school's work. Most were happy about their child's experience at the school. A small minority felt the school did

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not help their child to have a healthy lifestyle, but the inspection judges this aspect as good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Beacon Community College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 144 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1611 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	29	88	61	11	8	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	50	35	88	61	2	1	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	49	34	82	57	7	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	28	82	57	15	10	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	33	23	87	60	13	9	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	19	100	69	13	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	24	74	51	19	13	5	3
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	37	26	93	65	3	2	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	26	89	62	11	8	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	19	92	64	11	8	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	17	95	66	14	10	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	37	62	88	61	10	7	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	36	81	56	6	4	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Beacon Community College, Crowborough TN6 2AS

Thank you for your participation in the school's recent inspection. Beacon is a good school and enables you to make good progress. You reach above average standards and these are rising year on year. You have an outstanding range of curriculum opportunities available to you and you certainly have an extensive range of courses and clubs and activities to choose from. Leadership and management are good overall and the principal and governors have been instrumental in improving your school. You told us that you enjoyed school. You told us you feel very safe and very well cared for and we found that there are excellent systems to make sure that this happens. Your behaviour is good and at times exemplary. Your involvement in the school and community, and your awareness of the different peoples in Britain today and globally, is impressive. Well done for all the work you do in the special school and with primary children and in Gambia. We were fascinated when you told us that some of you wore the same clothes in Gambia for a week because your suitcases were too full of gifts and resources to allow room for clothes.

We have asked the college to ensure more of the teaching is outstanding and to make sure that assessment is developed in all subjects. We also think that learning tasks should be more closely matched to your individual needs.

You can help by continuing to work hard and letting teachers know when you find learning really motivating and inspiring or if you are unclear about how to improve.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Browning

Lead Inspector

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