Beacon Hill Community School

Market Square, Aspatria, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 3EZ

Inspection dates	30 September – 1 October 2015
Overall effectiveness	**Requires improvement**
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the school's leaders do not ensure that students make consistently good progress across subjects and year groups.
- Standards are rising, and increasing numbers of students are making the progress expected nationally in English and mathematics. However, too few exceed expected progress in these subjects.
- Groups of students do not make equally good progress in their learning. Boys and disadvantaged students achieve less well than other groups; gaps are not closing.
- The quality of teaching, while improving, is not yet consistently strong enough to promote good progress in all subjects and for all groups of students.
- Opportunities to share good practice in teaching are not routinely established across the school.

- Teachers do not consistently use information about students to match learning activities to their abilities; teachers' guidance and checks in lessons are not well established.
- Good attendance is not valued highly by all students. Too many students are absent from school, resulting in progress and attainment being disrupted.
- Teachers' judgements are not always accurate and plans for improvement are not always formed on robust and detailed student information.
- The quality of leadership is variable across the school. As a result, checks on initiatives to improve teaching are not always accurate.
- Students' literacy skills, especially in extended writing, are not well developed across subjects.
- Teachers' knowledge and expectations of students entering in Year 7 are not high enough, which slows their progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Teachers' marking usually helps students to improve their work.
- Students' personal development is supported well by the curriculum and educational visits and trips to raise aspirations and broaden horizons.
- The reading 'catch-up' programme is well organised and results in swift progress.

- Students in both key stages have access to good careers advice.
- Students behave well and their relationships with staff are very good. Systems to support students' welfare and keep students safe are strong.
- Teaching and learning in French are strong.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and governance by ensuring that:
  - leaders and governors check the impact of initiatives to improve progress and attainment, particularly for boys and disadvantaged students
  - teachers' judgements on students' assessment information are accurate and supported by strong evidence, validated externally when necessary
  - support is provided to deepen the skills of leaders across the school
  - links with local primary schools are strengthened to ensure that teachers know the standards students reached when they left Year 6 and build quickly from that foundation.

- Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate students' progress and attainment across the school by:
  - providing learning activities that challenge students of all abilities and enable them to achieve their best in all lessons
  - ensuring that teachers check students' understanding more effectively during lessons to help plan new learning
  - developing a consistent approach to supporting extended writing across all areas of the curriculum
  - ensuring that pockets of good practice are shared more widely among staff.

- Continue to drive improvements in attendance by working with families of students who are frequently absent from school so that the attendance of these students is improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management   requires improvement

- The school's leadership requires improvement because leaders' work to improve teaching and raise standards has not had sufficient impact on students' achievement across subjects. Leaders have not yet closed achievement gaps between boys and girls or between disadvantaged students and their peers.

- Both senior and middle leaders are making a contribution to the school's improvement, but the extent of the impact is variable. However, systems to monitor the standards that students are attaining, and the quality of teaching, are now in place and beginning to take effect.

- Nevertheless, the checks made by leaders on students' achievement are not robust enough. This means that their picture of achievement is not always accurate or well-evidenced. For example, some middle leaders do not check thoroughly enough the quality of teachers' judgements of students' progress; information is not always accurately recorded.

- The skills of subject leaders are underdeveloped. Some are new in role and their impact on rates of progress is not yet evident. Opportunities to share the skills of the best leaders with others in the school are sometimes missed.

- Leaders have not been able to secure improvement in the attendance of some students. Those students who are persistently absent from school have gaps in their learning that reduce their achievement. Attitudes towards attendance are not yet good and strategies to improve attendance have not had an impact.

- While it is not fully embedded, there is capacity within the school leadership to continue to improve the school. The new headteacher and deputy headteacher have taken a firm lead in driving swift improvement across the school. They recognise the school's strengths and areas for development: self-evaluation is realistic.

- Teaching is improving because the headteacher and deputy headteacher are now linking the quality of teaching to its impact on students' progress. As a result, their judgement of teaching is more accurate. The quality of teaching is checked regularly and appropriate support is provided to aid improvement. For example, 'teaching triads' were established to support and develop the teaching of English.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are outward-looking in their priority for improvement. They have sought and worked with a range of effective external support to drive improvement and standards across the school. For example, the 'schools consortium' has supported moderation and the professional development of teachers.

- The local authority provides additional support to raise standards. This improved attainment for the cohort of students who left in 2015. The provision of a local leader of education and a large number of visits by advisors have supported and developed leaders within the school.

- The school is committed to ensuring that all students achieve well. Pastoral leaders ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed and ensure that pastoral knowledge is shared so that barriers to learning are overcome, resulting in better academic progress.

- The curriculum offers a broad and balanced education and is creatively applied, even with the pressure of limited staff and specialists. No students leave school without entering further education, employment or training. The school holds full discussions with parents about students' curriculum choices and how these affect their life learning plans. These plans provide clear structured next steps for students. At Key Stage 4 all students experience appropriate work experience and receive good next steps guidance for careers. Good connections are made with local providers for apprenticeships and a well-established careers fair further supports students' career choice routes.

- Students in Year 7 and Year 8 are taught together in one group across subjects. The 'stage not age' curriculum provides sufficient development for students and is used as a creative solution for the small cohort and staff team within the school.

- Leaders of English, mathematics and science use masterclasses to engage with local primary schools. However, staff have a limited understanding of 'readiness for secondary school' and the details of the primary curriculum, so progress stalls for Year 7 students when they enter secondary school.

- The Year 7 'catch-up' funding is used to help students close gaps in their learning in literacy and numeracy. Students benefit from help and additional lessons, which helps them to develop age-appropriate skills in English and mathematics.

- Parents are generally positive about the school, and communication links between parents and staff are well established. Information sent home to parents about their child's targets and progress is clear and easy to understand.
- Staff are positive about the school and about the direction in which it is going. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have identified some training needs and recognise that supporting staff development will improve students' progress.
- The school enables all students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well and this is mapped across the curriculum. The deputy headteacher is creative in broadening horizons and raising aspirations. For example, the 'Bike Challenge', a bike ride to Holland, has become a highlight for some students and is now an annual venture.
- The school's safeguarding procedures meet requirements and are effective.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The governing body has been reconstituted and it has improved its support and challenge for senior leaders. Governors visit the school regularly, hold frequent meetings and are ambitious for the future of the school. They ask questions about the school's progress information and the quality of teaching, to make sure actions taken are effective.
  - Governors identify the school's strengths and areas for development. However, they have not been robust enough in ensuring that senior leaders check the accuracy of students' progress information from middle leaders. Governors have also not been swift enough in supporting the headteacher in the drive to improve attendance across the whole school.
  - Governors understand the value of good teaching and the importance of tackling underperformance in securing and raising standards. They support school leaders in recognising effective performance of teachers in improving rates of progress.
  - Governors know how the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding are spent. They monitor whether the premium is being used to narrow progress gaps between the school's disadvantaged students and non-disadvantaged students nationally. However, governors are not always clear on the impact of all funding.
  - Governors fulfil their statutory duties.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment   requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because the quality of teaching is variable across the school and does not lead to good progress in all subjects. However, more students are now making better progress; achievement in 2015 for English and mathematics was around national figures.
- Recent initiatives to improve teaching and learning and are not embedded across the school, consequently their impact on attainment and achievement is inconsistent.
- Teachers do not always use information about students consistently well to match learning activities to students' abilities. Not all teachers make accurate judgements about overall assessment and students' progression. Assessment of students' work is not deeply rooted with external checks to ensure accuracy.
- Literacy is still underdeveloped across the curriculum. Recent initiatives to improve writing have yet to have a consistent impact on the improvement and accuracy of written work, particularly of boys.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have driven the whole-school marking policy and ensured that this is used to engage students in their own understanding and development. The quality of marking across the school has notably improved. Students are now clear on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Students respond to teachers' advice and more progress is now being established in classrooms.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have redeveloped the tracking of assessment across the school. Teachers now enter students' information systematically throughout the year. This is analysed to identify students who need additional support. There are regular meetings to check students' progress to allow staff to identify those who are not progressing in line with expectations. Support through small-group and one-to-one sessions is designed to help students close gaps in their attainment. These sessions are beginning to help students make faster progress. The extra support offered to students is wide-ranging and delivered in a timely manner and tracked and reviewed regularly by the deputy headteacher.

- Students who arrive with the lowest reading levels are swiftly identified and supported to improve by following a reading support programme. The frequency and focus of reading have enabled students to make successful gains in their reading development. However, the pleasure for reading and promotion of wider independent reading are not thriving across the school.

- Teaching assistants are provided with clear guidance from the special educational needs coordinator and effective programmes of provision for students with special educational needs are implemented. Training has been provided for teachers to upskill to ensure that they can provide effective classroom support. For example, training on autism and attachment disorder has been provided.

- Where teaching leads to effective learning, students are guided by teachers to develop their knowledge and understanding with the use of questioning and well-developed activities suited to their needs. For example, a computer program in French helps to personalise support with language development for GCSE students.

- Teachers work hard to raise aspirations among students and ensure that additional activities are built into the curriculum. For example, a visit to a Buddhist temple and a visit by representatives of the National Science Museum have fostered an appreciation and love for learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote students' personal development and welfare is good.

- Relationships between staff and students are very good. Students say that they are well looked after. They appreciate the 'family feel' of the school, and know that their views are listened to carefully by all members of staff. The school works well in supporting the most vulnerable students to overcome challenges.

- Attendance is not always valued highly by all students and too many students are frequently absent from school. Consequently, their progress and attainment are disrupted. Although attendance and persistent absence has improved, there is still a significant change needed in attitudes towards attendance that needs to be driven across the school and community.

- Students value the opportunity to serve the school and community through raising money for charity and supporting local events. For example, students were involved in serving local pensioners Christmas dinner, developing a good sense of citizenship and British values.

- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and they are well prepared for the diversity of life in modern Britain. This is driven through school by the effective personal development curriculum and is supported by the vertical tutoring system.

- The school works well to make sure that students who need additional support settle well when they arrive at the school. This is particularly true for students who enter the school after the start of an academic year.

- Students' welfare is closely monitored and staff have a deep knowledge and understanding of all students. Staff liaise well with external support to ensure that issues and students' learning complexities are managed well.

- Students can describe how they keep themselves safe and robust risk assessments are undertaken by staff to ensure that trips and visits are safely conducted. The school provides continual reminders about safety using assemblies and strong links with the local police. The impact of the school's policies and procedures is strong: systems to safeguard students are effective.

- Systems to ensure that students are safe when they attend off-site provision are strong. Any absence is investigated promptly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.

- Staff and students agree that behaviour is managed well across the school.

- Students say behaviour has improved and poor behaviour is dealt with quickly and effectively. Occasionally minor disruption occurs, such as chatting in lessons, but students say this is very rare as learning is much more interesting than it was previously.

- Students behave well and show good attitudes to learning. There is a family approach to the welfare of students and all students are known well by all staff. Students mix well in social places and have a clear empathy for each other. They support each other using a variety of leadership opportunities, for example, as reading buddies and peer mentors.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes for students require improvement because not enough students make the progress of which they are capable across most of the subjects within the school.
- There are still wide gaps between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged students and others in the school and nationally. They are not closing at a rapid rate. Disadvantaged students achieved a quarter of a grade less than other students in the school in English in 2015, and achieved two thirds of a grade less than other students nationally for English.
- Different groups of students do not make equally good progress in their learning. Boys and disadvantaged students achieve less well than other groups. In 2015 disadvantaged students achieved a sixth of a grade less than other students in the school for mathematics and achieved two thirds of a grade less than other students nationally for mathematics.
- Students enter the school working at standards below the national average; however, GCSE results in 2015 indicate that their progress from starting points in English and mathematics has improved strongly. This progress is not yet consistently developed across all year groups and subjects.
- Students who are educated away from the school site make expected progress because they are interested and engaged in the courses they are following. All are following accredited courses to attain relevant qualifications.
- In English and mathematics students currently in school are not consistently exceeding progress across year groups. The most able students across the school have made slower progress because challenge and high expectations are not provided in all lessons and learning activities are not always matched to their abilities.
- Reading and its development are tracked and monitored well, with appropriate strategies making a strong impact on the development of students' reading.
- Information, advice and guidance for students are expertly delivered within school. The school has invested heavily in ensuring that all students' next steps are thoroughly supported. This results in better sustained progress beyond school.
- There are too few students in the school with special educational needs to draw conclusions about trends in relation to progress and national comparisons for students. Support for students with special educational needs is good across the school. Students grow in confidence and personal skills are developed.

School details

Unique reference number	112375
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10001638

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Trevor Gear
Headteacher	Mr D Millne
Telephone number	01697 320509
Website	www.beaconhill.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	beaconhill@beaconhill.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 June 2014

Information about this school

- Beacon Hill Community School is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection and took up post on 1 January 2015. The governing body has been reconstituted since the last inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below the national average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is slightly above the national average. The proportion of these supported through School Action Plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above the national average.
- The school uses the alternative provision provided by the Lakes College and West Cumbria Achievement Zone for a very small number of students in Year 10 and 11.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector observed teaching and learning across a range of lessons. One lesson was observed jointly with the headteacher. A learning walk to capture brief lesson observations was also undertaken.
- The lead inspector saw students' behaviour in lessons and around the school throughout the school day. During visits to lessons the lead inspector spoke to students about their work and progress and looked at students' work in books.
- The lead inspector viewed a registration period, and a reading support session.
- The lead inspector looked closely at a wide range of documents, including: the school's view of how well it is performing; development planning; policies and procedures; student progress tracking; records of leaders' monitoring of teaching; arrangements for the appraisal of teachers' work; staff training and records of governors' meetings. The lead inspector also reviewed records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, as well as a wide range of information uploaded on the school website.
- Formal discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, middle leaders and a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector met with a group of students and also had informal discussions with students in corridors, in lessons and also during social times.
- The lead inspector took into account parent responses provided by the school (due to a low response on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire) and 15 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Dawn Platt, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector

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