

Inspection of Beechfield School

Gammons Lane, Watford, Hertfordshire WD24 5TY

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 May 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are enthusiastic about school. They experience a broad and rich curriculum that extends their interests and develops their aspirations. Pupils take pride in their work and achieve well. From Nursery to Year 6, they are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Pupils respond to the high expectations staff have of their learning and of their behaviour. Pupils listen carefully to adults and to what each other has to say. Classrooms are calm and purposeful places to learn. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and respectful. Pupils are well cared for and they feel safe in school. Pupils say that bullying rarely happens. They say this is because adults listen and help them sort out any problems they have at an early stage.

Pupils value each other's differences and are respectful of different cultures and beliefs. They learn to talk about how they are feeling and reflect on their actions. Pupils learn to recognise their own and others' emotions. This helps them regulate their own behaviour, and support others when they are upset.

Feedback from parents is overwhelmingly positive. Parents appreciate the caring ethos and adults' support of their children's social and emotional development, and their academic achievement.

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

Leaders have put in place a coherent and ambitious curriculum that is supporting all pupils to achieve well. In each subject, leaders have considered the knowledge pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn it. This is enabling pupils to know more and remember more from the subjects that they study. In the core subjects, the curriculum is well established. Pupils become confident readers, writers, mathematicians and scientists. The curriculum is well adapted for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND learn well alongside their peers. They make good progress across the curriculum.

Leaders recognise that there is further work to do to make sure that the curriculum is as well designed in a few foundation subjects. Pupils are not as confident in their understanding of important knowledge of the subject as they are across the rest of the curriculum.

Leaders have adopted a systematic programme for teaching synthetic phonics and early reading. Staff receive regular training and guidance to teach this programme well. Children are introduced to daily phonics lessons from the start of Reception. Pupils regularly practise and apply their phonics knowledge when reading. They read books that are closely matched to the phonics they are learning. Pupils are becoming accurate, confident and fluent readers.

Leaders identify the pupils who need extra support to help them keep up with reading. Pupils in key stage 2 who have not yet developed their reading fluency also receive extra teaching. However, staff do not consistently build on pupils' phonics learning when they are supporting older pupils to develop their reading fluency. This means that a small number of pupils are not catching up as quickly as they could.

Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the books they read. Adults bring stories to life when they read aloud. The curriculum for reading in key stage 2 is well structured. Pupils talk about the choices authors make and how this affects the way we think about a character or a situation. Pupils develop their knowledge of language and deepen their understanding of texts. Pupils achieve well in reading.

There is a strong focus on developing children's language in the early years. This helps children to communicate confidently and make sense of the world around them. Adults skilfully question children to help develop children's thinking and their play. Well-established routines and clear expectations help children feel safe to explore new things. Opportunities for children to develop their mathematical understanding are carefully planned. Children's experience in the early years prepares them well for learning in key stage 1.

Leaders support pupils' personal development well through the curriculum. There is a comprehensive programme in place for personal, social, health and economic education and sex and relationships education. This is implemented well across the school. A wide range of visits and visitors to school complement the curriculum pupils are learning. Pupils are developing the knowledge they need to become thoughtful, responsible citizens. Pupils are developing their interests and aspirations for their future careers.

Governors and the trust coordinate their work well. They are rigorous in holding leaders to account for the impact of their work to safeguard pupils and to continue to improve the quality education pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a positive culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained and receive regular updates to keep their knowledge up to date. Staff recognise the signs of potential abuse. They know the importance of reporting all concerns, no matter how small. Leaders follow up concerns promptly. They work with other agencies effectively to ensure that pupils are safe, and families access the support they need.

Leaders ensure that the necessary checks are carried out before staff are employed to work at the school. Pupils and parents are well informed about online safety. Governors ensure that leaders prioritise safeguarding.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Although leaders identify pupils who need additional teaching to develop their confidence and fluency in reading, this extra support is not carried out consistently well across the school. This means that some older pupils who receive additional teaching for their reading do not catch up as quickly as they could. Leaders should refine their guidance for staff who are supporting weaker readers so that staff are clear about the prompts they should use to help pupils apply their phonics knowledge when they are practising reading in school.
- The curriculum for the foundation subjects is clearly defined in most subjects. There are a few subjects where the curriculum is less clearly organised. Pupils are less confident to explain how what they are learning connects and builds on what they have learned before. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is consistently well defined across all the foundation subjects so pupils to develop the important subject knowledge and understanding that creates strong foundations for future learning.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	145350
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10226849
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	405
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Elizabeth Leeman
Headteacher	Gillian Jackson
Website	www.beechfield.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Beechfield School converted to become an academy school in March 2018. When its predecessor school, Beechfield School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- Beechfield School is part of the Inclusive Multi Academy Trust (the trust), which consists of three primary schools in Watford, Hertfordshire.
- A new leadership team has been appointed since the school became an academy.
- The school makes use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders to discuss the quality of education and safeguarding for pupils. A meeting was held with the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, history and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed the information that is published on the school website.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors, and other members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector held online meetings with the vice chair of trustees and the school's improvement partner.
- To evaluate the arrangements that are in place to safeguard pupils and staff, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader and a deputy designated safeguarding leader, considered school records, and spoke with staff and pupils. Inspectors scrutinised the single central record of pre-employment checks and the school's safeguarding records.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at play times. They spoke with pupils to seek their views and experiences of the school. Inspectors reviewed the records of behaviour and bullying incidents.
- Inspectors considered the 103 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, together with 53 free-text comments. Inspectors reviewed the 36 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. They also considered the 120 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Katherine Douglas, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Williams	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rod Warsap	Ofsted Inspector

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