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Mr Andrew Burton
Head of School
Beachcroft AP Academy
35 Finchley Road
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Dear Mr Burton

Short inspection of Beachcroft AP Academy

Following my visit to the school on 14 December 2016 with Diane Rochford, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have made sure that the school has adapted to meet the needs of those who attend since it became an academy in April 2014. Leaders identified a need for increased alternative provision for primary-aged pupils locally, and extended the age range of the school to cater for these pupils from January 2016.

Strong relationships between staff and pupils, reinforced by leaders, ensure that pupils engage well with their learning. Where possible, pupils are supported to make a successful return to mainstream settings. Those who remain at this school are provided with opportunities to study relevant courses and qualifications. As a result they are well prepared for their next step in education or training.

Leaders make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching and learning in the school. They understand precisely where the strengths and weaknesses lie and put credible plans in place to tackle any weaknesses swiftly.

Systems for assessing pupils' progress have been revised to include broader aspects of pupils' development, such as behaviour. This work is very recent, however, and it is not possible to determine how the different strands of the school's work come together to secure improvements for individual pupils. Consequently, teachers and other adults do not have all the relevant information at their fingertips about wider priorities for each pupil when planning activities.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have embedded a strong culture across the school with regard to safeguarding. Leaders, members of staff and other agencies communicate effectively using robust systems. Pupils are protected from harm because relevant information is shared between all those who work with the pupil concerned.

Leaders identify pupils who are especially vulnerable to risks such as child sexual exploitation, substance misuse, gang culture and radicalisation. They commission specialist support from the police and other agencies. Working together with these agencies, leaders make sure that pupils are aware of the risks they may face, and develop strategies to avoid these dangers.

All members of staff receive regular training relating to safeguarding and child protection. Consequently, they are alert to any indicators of potential abuse or danger. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- Leaders know the school well. They make sure that staff are skilled at re-engaging pupils who have had disrupted or difficult experiences in previous placements. Leaders and staff develop good working relationships with pupils. Consequently, pupils make positive progress in their learning and behaviour.
- Pupils make excellent progress in their reading as a result of carefully planned interventions. Two thirds of pupils made double the amount of progress expected in their reading age within six months of joining the school. During the inspection, pupils read aloud in class accurately and with confidence. When pupils found this difficult, another pupil stepped in to help unobtrusively, showing that this positive peer support is commonplace.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work in books shows that, over time, they make good progress. Primary-aged pupils do especially well, making very strong progress and demonstrating a pride in their work.
- The school's information shows that in 2016 the proportion of pupils making expected progress by the end of key stage 3 was much higher in English than in mathematics. You have looked carefully at this information to work out why there should be such a discrepancy for this group of pupils. You have identified that these findings were the result of imprecise assessment using the old system in place at the time. You have put measures in place to ensure that the revised assessment system is more robust.
- The achievement of pupils in Year 11 has improved year on year. This is a result of greater consistency in teaching personnel and the implementation of an appropriate range of courses. In 2016, around four out of every five pupils attained five GCSEs.

- Since joining the school in 2015, you have worked with leaders across the wider academy trust to revise the assessment systems used to measure pupils' progress. You have ensured that the new systems are relevant and meaningful to the cohort of pupils you work with. They include checks on the progress pupils make in relation to behaviour and attendance alongside their academic progress and the impact of therapies. Currently, however, each of these measures stands alone. They are not brought together to demonstrate how the whole of the school's provision works towards positive outcomes for pupils. Consequently, the impact of low attendance on academic progress, for example, relies on anecdotal evidence rather than being measurable. Similarly, the positive impact of therapeutic work on academic progress is not clear because these aspects of the school's work are separated. One result of this separation is that teachers and therapists do not have precise information about priorities for each individual when planning activities.
- The newly appointed lead therapist for the academy trust has a clear vision for a structured approach to therapies across the school. She has carried out an audit of the therapy provision available to make sure that all the additional needs of pupils are met. Current provision includes speech and language therapy, art therapy and drama therapy. It is too soon to judge the impact of the changes she has made since September 2016.
- Speech and language therapy provision within the school is a strength. Staff have received appropriate training which has improved their awareness of the communication difficulties experienced by pupils. The therapist carefully measures and records individual improvements made as a result of interventions.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that pupils' outcomes are improved by:

- bringing together and refining systems for tracking and measuring pupils' progress with regard to academic achievement, behaviour, attendance and the impact of therapies
- using the information gained to ensure that provision is sharply focused on the key priorities for each pupil.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Westminster. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gaynor Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection: the strength of pupils' outcomes and the systems for measuring these; action taken by leaders to tackle the difference in achievement between English and mathematics at key stage 3; the impact of therapists' work on pupils' outcomes; whether safeguarding is effective, particularly with regard to child sexual exploitation, gang culture and substance misuse.

Inspectors carried out a range of activities to explore these areas during the inspection. Meetings were held with senior leaders, therapists and a member of the local advisory board. A telephone conversation was held with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust. Inspectors made visits to lessons jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including that relating to pupils' outcomes, safeguarding and leaders' evaluation of the school's performance. A detailed scrutiny of work and documentation relating to a sample of pupils was undertaken.