

Name of School:	The Beacon School
Head teacher:	Neil Birch
Hub:	London Special and AP Hub
School type:	Special

Estimate at this QA Review:	Outstanding
Date of this Review:	12/03/2018
Estimate at last QA Review	This was the first Challenge Partner review
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	New school opened September 2016

Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising of host school leaders and visiting reviewers agree that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

School Improvement Strategies	Outstanding
Outcomes for Pupils	Outstanding
Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment	Outstanding
Area of Excellence	Accredited
Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence	Not applicable
Overall Estimate	Outstanding

Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.

1. Information about the school

- The Beacon Folkestone is an all-age school (3-19 years). It provides for 356 pupils with profound severe and complex learning needs. The school opened its doors for the first time in September 2016, creating a new single school from the Federation of Foxwood and Highview School.
- Within that Federation, both schools attained independent Ofsted outstanding judgements in June 2014. The Beacon has built on the expertise of both outstanding schools and is striving towards creating a single centre of excellence for “Learning, Support and Development”.
- The school has a strong cooperative ethos and culture, building on personalised learning to ensure all students thrive within school and beyond. Learning at The Beacon offers a child-centred, ‘needs led’ curriculum. It incorporates elements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, National Curriculum and external accreditation as appropriate, with a strong emphasis on life and social skills.

2.1 School Improvement Strategies - What went well

- The Beacon School opened in September 2016 as a result of the amalgamation of two previous outstanding federated special schools. The management of change, in terms of bringing the two schools together, was very sensitively planned and well managed over a two year period. There is now a very cohesive staff team who have all been involved in creating the ethos and vision for the school.
- A culture where coaching and solution focussed thinking is fostered and promoted, has resulted in all staff feeling empowered to be involved in decision making. All staff feed in to the authorship of the School Improvement Plan, which extends ownership. This is very much a live document. It is reviewed and amended regularly in order to reflect progress towards meeting targets and to identify emerging priorities.
- Providing a curriculum that meets the needs of the wide range of ability and need within the school was a huge challenge for leaders. They initially introduced tiered zones. Leaders have decided that they will move to a five tiered pathway so that pupils are able to move between pathways, in order that their individual needs and interests are better met. This will refine personalisation and ensure that the individualised targets from Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are better addressed.
- Leaders ensure that staff well being and resilience is given very high priority, through the introduction of the PERMA (Positive Emotions, Engagement, Positive Relationships, Meaning, Achievement) self reflection model. There is a focus

group dedicated to this and their work is given high prominence. All staff are encouraged to contribute their ideas in a highly visual way. This collegiate approach underpins staff training, development, coaching and support. Ultimately it contributes to building staff resilience and enables all stakeholders to be involved in creating a positive school culture.

- Ensuring that all staff have access to high quality training opportunities, is another important factor which builds capacity and contributes to effective succession planning. Staff are undertaking NPQML and NPQSL courses, which are strengthening leadership and moving staff from the operational and the managerial to a more strategic approach.

2.2 School Improvement Strategies - Even better if...

... the impact of all the initiatives were fully embedded across the school and celebrated more widely

... the outdoor learning spaces were further developed to increase the learning opportunities for pupils.

3.1 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - What went well

- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and trusting. These contribute to creating a culture and ethos of praise and encouragement that enables the building of self esteem and enjoyment of learning.
- Staff and pupils' pride in their school is reflected in the warm and welcoming atmosphere, the strong climate for learning, mutual respect and a culture of high expectations.
- All staff manage pupils' behaviour extremely well and, as a result, there is a calm and purposeful environment in all lessons and very high levels of engagement.
- Teachers' lesson planning is based on a detailed knowledge and understanding of each pupil's special educational need. Lessons are tailored to ensure that all pupils make progress, using a wide range of teaching strategies to maximise the impact on learning.
- Personalised delivery is evident in all lessons and achieved through effective formative and summative assessment. There is clear evidence of building on prior learning to demonstrate progress over time.
- Dynamic pace ensures time in every lesson is maximised. Higher level learning tasks enable consistent stretch and challenge, which means no time is wasted and progress is accelerated.
- Pupils are actively engaged in the learning process, showing resilience in the best lessons and a commitment to achieving their best. They persevere when confronted with challenge. The emphasis is on stretching their ability beyond

expectations.

- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge, combined with passionate and dedicated teaching, makes a positive impact on progress and high engagement.
- Teachers' effective questioning helps to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. The excellent collaboration between pupils clearly demonstrated their positive attitudes to learning, which was evident in all lessons observed.
- Deployment of staff is effective. It leads to high levels of engagement and promotes challenge. High quality interventions were seen in many classes with teaching assistants (TAs) leading learning and capturing assessments live in lessons.
- A wide variety of learning skills, such as cued articulation and Russian scaffolding, are embedded in order to promote independent learning skills. Teachers have a toolkit of tailored pedagogical strategies to engage learners and these are used consistently across the school. This results in the vast majority of learning in lessons being at least good or better.

3.2 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Even better if...

... opportunities for using phonics and key literacy skills across all lessons were maximised and that age appropriate texts were used to promote reading across the school

... all teaching assistants were trained in using focused and targeted interventions in order to secure progress and capture achievements in all lessons

... recording of developmental dialogue in marking was more robust and feedback to pupils to improve the quality of learning over time was explicit

... dedicated reflection and response time with learners was consistent across all lessons.

4. Outcomes for Pupils

- Upon amalgamation, the school decided to move away from B squared as an assessment tool and chose to use 'Pupil Asset' (PAPS). This system was also adopted by all the special schools across Kent. The collective use allows for robust benchmarking and moderation across all the schools. The tool was created for mainstream settings but The Beacon School has taken a lead role in adapting it for the specialist sector.
- Across Kent, 'good' progress was identified as making two levels of progress for Functional Skills at Key Stage 5. However, at The Beacon all learners were making or exceeding this target and the school felt it was not an aspirational goal.

Consequently, they set the more challenging target of three levels of progress to stretch and challenge pupils more effectively.

- Headline progress data across core subjects demonstrates that the vast majority of learners are making at least expected progress and over 50% are making accelerated progress in both English and Maths.
- Flightpaths are used to track and monitor pupil achievement. The curriculum is carefully planned and tailored to create appropriate pathways for pupils and leads to extensive opportunity for accreditation. The current provision is constructed on a three tier approach. However, the school recognises the need to extend this to allow for greater personalisation. Students in Key Stage 5 are currently studying vocational qualifications which adds breadth and depth to the accreditation portfolio.
- The school is rich in data, regarding progress across each cohort from the early years to Key Stage 5. However, this is presented in tabular fashion without an accompanying analysis and supporting script. There is a need to produce a narrative regarding outcome data at each key stage with clear and detailed explanation from starting points to final results. Last year, students in Year 11 left with a wide portfolio of qualifications including GCSEs, Functional Skills and Entry Level certificates.
- The school invests in monitoring and reporting non-academic progress and successes. Parents, carers and pupils are central to this process through a structured programme of reviews of learning linked closely to ECHP outcomes. Pupils' success is celebrated and evident in the purposeful and positive learning environment across the school.
- The school rigorously monitors destinations of learners for a three year period. Last year, 93% of learners were in education, employment or training, but in previous years this figure has been even higher.

5. Area of Excellence

Applied Behaviour Analysis

5.1 Why has this area been identified as a strength?

Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) is the use of a behaviour analytic learning methods for improving learning and behaviour. The school applies this method in four classes and reports that it helps to secure the school places of the pupils with challenging needs. This is because it reduces their behaviour difficulties significantly. The extensive staff training ensures the school's delivery demonstrates an outstanding example of this method. Managers and outside agencies observe that the pupils in these classes are engaged, enthusiastic and remain focused throughout its delivery. The school now

demonstrates good examples of this methodology, such as thorough assessment, ensuring pace and stimulating personalised resources. Excellent delivery of the ABA methods has been observed by the Challenge Partners reviewers. The method is delivered in a positive manner by teachers and support staff alike. The atmosphere in lessons was observed to be calm and supportive. Lessons include a great deal of praise, positive reinforcement and good relationships, which underpin the whole classroom ethos. The school has noticed that, if the pupils are taught this method at a younger age, their chances of reintegrating back into a class with their peers is much higher.

5.2 What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

The school researched and identified ABA methodology as an effective approach for a particular cohort. One of the teachers has studied ABA for seven years and is now completing an ABA Masters. This teacher and the lead HLTA have been developing this method within the school for 18 months, implementing this technique in four classes (approximately 20 pupils). The school has an external consultant who monitors, verifies and helps to refine the school's practice. The teacher leading this method has trained and supported 19 staff in implementing the methods. Leaders have ensured the class is fully staffed to implement this method for all pupils in the four classes. TAs have had around 10 hours of initial training, with consequent coaching and modelling being the main methods used to up-skill them.

The principles of ABA methods are being disseminated throughout other areas of the school on a needs-led basis.

5.3 What evidence is there on pupil outcomes?

The school has clear evidence of how individual pupils are gaining skills. These are tracked and compared to baseline measurements and the school's analysis shows progress in almost all skills taught. Anecdotally, the staff involved in this class observe that pupils' behaviour has improved, that the self esteem of individual pupils has increased and that pupils who previously avoided interacting with peers are now engaging in small groups. The school is aware that there is a need to be able to present the impact of this work more clearly and are developing methods of doing this.

A large number of parents of pupils who are receiving this teaching method, report very significant improvement in behaviour of their child outside school.

5.4 What is the name, job title and email address of the staff lead in this area?

NAME: Ana Job

TITLE: class teacher

EMAIL: ana.job@thebeacon.kent.sch.uk

6. What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?

To access best practice across the network. Leaders are trained as reviewers and are excited about the forthcoming opportunities that being part of a review team offers.

This review will support the school's continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities.