

Beachcroft School

35 Finchley Road, London, NW8 0NW

Inspection dates 20–21 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- When students are admitted to this pupil referral unit (PRU), their attainment is below that expected, because of a history of disrupted education. Despite this, on entry to the school, they make accelerated progress and achieve well.
- All Year 11 leavers gain a variety of nationally recognised qualifications, with some students achieving GCSE passes at C grade and above.
- Teaching is typically good and students benefit from some lessons that are outstanding.
- Behaviour is good and students, many of whom have gone through challenging times, gain a much-improved understanding of keeping safe.
- The introduction of new policies and ways of working has given staff confidence and has speeded up development in all aspects of the unit's work.
- Leaders and managers at all levels have successfully established new provision at Key Stage 4 and relocated to a new building.
- Good leadership and management have ensured that standards in teaching and learning are good and improving.
- Rates of attendance are rising because appropriate new courses have been introduced for older students.
- The support of both the tri-borough partnership and the experienced management committee contributes well to the work of the unit and its good overall effectiveness.
- Most students transfer back successfully to mainstream schools or move on to college or employment. This demonstrates the good progress they have made.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Most teaching is good rather than outstanding.
- Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to ensure learning activities are matched to each individual student's needs.
- Not all middle leaders identify clearly enough how to improve the subjects for which they are responsible.
- Marking does not always show students how to improve.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons and/or parts of lessons. Some lessons were jointly observed with the head of school and a senior member of staff.
- Meetings were held with students, the chair of the management committee, and different members of staff, including senior leaders and two representatives of the local authority. Telephone discussions also took place with a feeder school and Local Authority external advisors.
- A visit took place to an alternative provision provider.
- There were insufficient responses to the online inspection questionnaire (Parent View). The inspector took into account the school's own surveys. Questionnaire responses from members of staff were also considered.
- The inspector scrutinised examples of students' past and present work and looked at various documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and planning, information on students' academic progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Sonja Joseph, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Beachcroft School is a pupil referral unit which caters for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It provides for pupils at risk of exclusion, those permanently excluded and those on fixed term exclusions
- An executive headteacher was appointed in January 2012 and is responsible for other pupil referral units across the three local authorities.
- The unit operates under the care of a tri-borough authority partnership, which includes Westminster City Council, Hammersmith and Fulham Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.
- The unit accepts students from all the authorities in the partnership.
- Most pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and the large majority are boys. A few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- All students are considered to have special educational needs (school action plus) which are behavioural, emotional or social difficulties.
- Nearly one quarter of students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium varies considerably from year to year but is, overall, well above average. Pupil premium funding is intended for the support of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, in the care of a local authority or from families in the armed forces. There are a low number of students under the care of the three local authorities.
- The unit opened provision for students at Key Stage 4 in September 2011.
- Beachcroft School moved into a new building in January 2013.
- The unit uses a range of alternative education providers, including 'Aspire', a programme which provides a one-year programme of study to complete GCSE courses and the 'Treehouse' project, which offers therapeutic support to students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Move more teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - setting work that varies in difficulty so that all students are always given challenging work at the right level for their abilities
 - making sure that all marking gives students a clear understanding of what to do to improve
 - make all lessons exciting and relevant by reducing the use of printed worksheets
 - ensuring all students are encouraged to engage in discussions to extend their learning.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - supporting and challenging middle leaders to help them know the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects and use this knowledge to make improvements to teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Almost all students arrive with educational standards well below those expected for their age. Nevertheless, throughout all areas they achieve well in all subjects if they attend regularly. They begin to close the gap with those in mainstream schools.
- Last year, almost all leavers gained qualifications, some at A* to C grades of GCSE, including in both English and mathematics, which reflects good progress during their one year at the unit. This year, even more are on track to gain 5 A* to C qualifications. The courses available provide chances for all to succeed so that none are left out or discriminated against. As a result of their successes, most go on to education, training or employment.
- The school has placed a high priority on improving the students' speaking, listening and reading skills. Staff use a wide range of strategies to engage the more reluctant students, including using specific pieces of writing that challenge their thinking about moral issues. An example of this was seen in an outstanding English lesson. Students made excellent progress in developing their understanding of the use of language to explain why the poet used specific words and phrases to show the horrors of war.
- Short-stay students make particularly good progress in English and mathematics. They are prepared well for their return to mainstream education. Beachcroft and other schools work very well together to share responsibility for these students. The school is successful in increasing the number of students reintegrated back into mainstream.
- There is no difference in progress between different groups of students. This includes boys, girls, disabled students and those who have different special educational needs, students from different ethnic minorities and student in receipt of the pupil premium.
- Students eligible for pupil premium achieve GCSE grades in English and mathematics in line with other students. Specific catch-up lessons in literacy and effective alternative provision that matches students' needs leads to the attainment of qualifications at the appropriate level. Those students observed on a visit to a separate provider were working enthusiastically and with a high degree of independence. The students respond well to the adult environment, which prepares them well for the next stage of their education, training or employment. No students are entered early for GCSE examinations.
- Although students are making improved progress in every key stage, this could be even greater if teachers planned activities in lessons that consistently matched students' individual levels of ability.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good use of information from tests taken by students when they start at the unit helps teachers to choose and plan appropriate courses for students to study. This helps to build students' confidence and gives them an incentive to attend school more regularly.
- In the best lessons, teachers plan conscientiously and have high expectations of what students can achieve. In such lessons, students are fully engaged because the teachers adapt the activities to meet individuals' learning needs and interests. For example, in an effective English lesson a small group of students became more interested in the use of language in advertisements when the teacher related it to their own experiences of social networking sites.
- A key strength, where teaching is stronger, is how well teachers plan tasks that are suitable for all abilities, as well as matching the requirements of the examination courses students follow. This was particularly evident in an art lesson, where students were working towards the tasks required for them to achieve a specific grade rather than simply a pass.
- Teachers and teaching assistants listen carefully to pupils' responses in lessons and are quick to adapt the level of their input and support. As a result, pupils gain confidence in expressing their own ideas and pushing themselves to tackle more challenging tasks. For example, in an

information and communication technology lesson for Year 11 pupils, one student who spoke to the inspector was particularly proud of his newspaper report. His understanding of the importance of writing in an appropriate style for the intended audience was very impressive.

- Communication skills are generally promoted well through frequent discussion and question and answer sessions. However, on a very small number of occasions, teachers allow more confident students to dominate. When this happens, quieter students have fewer opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills.
- In a few lessons, teachers either provide work which is too easy or they use too many worksheets, which does not enthuse the students and slows progress. Marking does not always show students how to improve.
- Teaching delivered through external providers, commissioned by the unit, is also good and in some cases outstanding. Unit leaders make regular checks on the quality of these alternative provisions and students' progress is carefully tracked alongside that of others in the unit.
- All the staff are adept in praising students' efforts and successes. Positive, warm relationships were evident at all times, even when students were being slightly defensive or occasionally unwilling to cooperate.
- Parents' surveys undertaken by the school show that they agree with the school's evaluation that teaching is good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents and students agree how much students' behaviour improves during their time at the unit. Many students arrive with a history of failure in their previous schools, and many readily admit they have made ill-informed choices in the past. Others are facing exceptional difficulties in their personal lives, which have the potential to affect their learning.
- Specific programmes such as the 'Plan B' project are successful in helping students face up to their past actions, for example in the way they treat other people. In addition to turning their behaviour around, this adds to their understanding of keeping safe.
- Students acknowledge that bullying such as name-calling does occur, as well as the rare homophobic comment. However, they say this is quickly dealt with by staff, and followed up in personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons.
- Where behaviour slips in lessons, it is generally because the content has drifted and has become repetitive or uninteresting. Sometimes it is because tasks are not well matched to students' levels of ability and are not sufficiently challenging or motivating.
- Most students make an effort to attend regularly. There are many examples of students who have not attended school for a considerable time in the past achieving 80% and 90% attendance now. However, despite the rigorous and imaginative systems in place, there is a minority of students who still refuse to attend regularly.
- Behaviour is good in class and at other less structured times, such as in the breakfast club. This is a marked improvement over time, especially for the students with particular behavioural needs, and it has led to a reduction in fixed-term exclusions.
- The behaviour and safety of students who attend the alternative provision are checked by the school very regularly. Their attendance and behaviour are good and staff at the alternative provision visited confirmed that the students are well motivated and relate well to one another.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher, head of school and senior leaders are a strong team who have raised the expectations of staff and students. Plans for improvement and rigorous checks on how well the unit is doing show that leaders are sustaining and improving outcomes for students and ensuring that achievement for all groups is good.
- A rigorous system has been introduced that allows staff to see at a glance the progress of individuals and of different groups, and to identify gaps in learning quickly. Where staff have

identified gaps in the performance of some students, especially in terms of reading, writing or mathematical skills, additional funding via the pupil premium has been used astutely to provide intervention lessons designed to raise standards.

- Senior leaders have a good understanding of how effectively teachers are teaching. Targets have been set for staff to improve which are explicitly linked to improvements in students' learning. No members of staff are offered salary increases unless justified by their performance.
- Some middle leaders do not evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning in their subject areas frequently enough to decide what improvements can be made. As a result, their planning for improvement is not always clearly focused and is therefore less effective than it could be.
- Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good and is supported effectively by all subjects. For example in an information and communication technology lesson, students developed their knowledge and understanding of human rights in Rwanda by considering the effects of war.
- Changes to the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 4, have contributed to greater progress and raised attainment, as it offers a good balance of academic, practical and vocational subjects and high-quality personal learning programmes. This ensures students are well prepared for further education or the world of work.
- The school has drawn very successfully on support for leadership, management, teaching and development from the tri-borough local authority partnership.
- Safeguarding arrangements fully meet requirements and exceptional on-going partnership work with parents, carers and other agencies ensures vulnerable students are kept safe.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the management committee know the school very well and provide a blend of support and challenge to school leaders. They offer a very good level of support for safeguarding, which ensures that statutory requirements are met. Members of the management committee have attended appropriate training to help them hold the school to account for safeguarding. Performance management systems are used to set appropriate targets for leaders and teachers and the management committee know about the link between the quality of teachers' work and arrangements for pay. The management committee is kept informed about the quality of teaching, the quality of the provision and how well students are achieving, including those supported by the pupil premium. They are aware of how pupil premium funding is spent but have not fully checked on the impact of the spending.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	133923
Local authority	Westminster
Inspection number	402585

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	David Ward
Headteacher	Graham Sacks
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2010
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