

Inspection of Beacon Hill Community School

Market Square, Aspatria, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 3EZ

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 June 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Beacon Hill provides pupils with a safe and welcoming environment in which to learn. Some pupils join at different times during their secondary education. They are helped to settle quickly into the ethos of the school. Pupils enjoy coming to the school.

The school is a calm and orderly place. Staff develop positive and respectful relationships with pupils. Pupils who may present challenging behaviour receive effective, bespoke pastoral support. Pupils engage in their learning and listen carefully.

Pupils take part in many opportunities that help to develop their confidence and independence, including the Cumbrian award. Pupils love taking part in outdoor activities, such as mountain biking and skiing. They benefit from trips and visits, for example, to a theatre, and science- and robotics-related activities. This enhances their understanding of the curriculum. Pupils enjoy taking on leadership roles, where they can make a difference, such as being prefects and sports leaders.

The school has high expectations of what pupils should achieve. However, these expectations are not fully realised. This is because, in some subjects in key stage 3, pupils do not have the opportunity to learn a curriculum which is broad and balanced and in line with the national curriculum. In addition, there are inconsistencies in the delivery of some subject curriculums across the school. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

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

The school has raised its expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Some pupils arrive with a history of poor attendance. The school works closely with these pupils and their families to address and remove barriers to attendance. The attendance of pupils improves over their time at the school.

Governors have challenged the school to improve many aspects of its provision. They have successfully supported the school's increased engagement with the local community. Staff are proud to work at the school. The school is considerate of their well-being and workload.

Since the last inspection, the school has reviewed and refined the curriculum. Subject curriculums are designed well. The school has identified the building blocks of knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which they should learn these. However, in some subjects in key stage 3, pupils are not being taught the full scope of the national curriculum. This hinders their achievement and affects their preparation for future learning.

In some subjects, staff use their secure subject knowledge to explain new topics to pupils clearly. Typically, pupils achieve well in these subjects. However, in other subjects, the activities provided do not always help pupils to understand and retain key knowledge. This means that some pupils, including some with special educational needs and/or

disabilities (SEND), do not develop a deep understanding or build their knowledge securely over time.

In subjects where the curriculum is delivered well, checks on pupils' knowledge are made skilfully. The delivery of the curriculum in these subjects is adapted to address errors or misconceptions that pupils may have. However, in other subjects, where the delivery of the subject is less effective, some pupils are moved on to new learning before they have fully understood previous content. This stops them from clearing any misconceptions that they may have and building on what they know.

The school identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND at an early stage. They share this information with staff. Some staff use this information well to adapt how they deliver the curriculum for pupils with SEND. However, this is not consistent across the school. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they could or retain key knowledge over time.

Many pupils arrive with gaps in their reading knowledge. Key staff are trained to support weaker readers. This is helping pupils, particularly in key stage 3, to catch up. However, some of the initiatives to improve reading are not fully embedded. In addition, pupils across the school do not have sufficient opportunities to read for pleasure or to develop their knowledge of subject-specific vocabulary consistently across the curriculum. This impacts on pupils' reading skills and limits how well these develop over time.

The personal development programme supports pupils' social, emotional and mental health well. Pupils receive age-appropriate information about relationships and sex and health education. They show respect for differences. Pupils profit from high-quality careers advice and guidance, including information about apprenticeships. They participate in opportunities such as work experience, visits from external speakers and mock interviews. This helps them to make choices about their future.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects at key stage 3, some pupils do not have the opportunity to study the full range of topics as outlined in the national curriculum. Consequently, these pupils do not receive as broad and balanced an education as they should. This hinders their achievement. The school should ensure pupils are taught the full curriculum content to support their academic development and readiness for the next stage of learning.
- The school's curriculum is not implemented consistently. Some staff do not choose the most appropriate activities or adapt the delivery of the curriculum to teach the knowledge that they want pupils to learn. This means that some pupils, including some

pupils with SEND, are not able to deepen their learning. The school should ensure that staff receive training and guidance to enable them to deliver subject curriculums consistently well.

- In some subjects, some staff do not check sufficiently well whether pupils have understood their learning before moving on to new content. This means that some pupils are not secure in their learning and have misconceptions or errors in their understanding. The school should ensure that it identifies and addresses gaps in learning before they move on to new learning, so that pupils can build on previous knowledge over time.
- The curriculum for reading has not been fully developed and is not implemented consistently. As a result, pupils do not access the learning opportunities they need to build on their reading knowledge in a timely manner. Some pupils do not achieve as well in reading as they could. The school should ensure that its programme for reading has been fully considered and is implemented consistently across school to support pupils' progress over time.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	112375
Local authority	Cumberland
Inspection number	10379975
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Davidson
Headteacher	Tom Hailwood
Website	www.beaconhill.cumbria.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 January 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Cumbria Futures Federation, which includes Solway Community School. The headteacher is also headteacher of Solway Community School. Many staff at this school also teach there.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been changes to leadership and staffing. This includes the appointment of a new headteacher, deputy headteacher and all new subject leaders.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider and one unregistered alternative provider for a very small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements

(quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This is the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and members of staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He also spoke with a representative from the local authority. An inspector spoke with representatives from alternative providers that the school uses.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences in school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation documents and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and art and design. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also looked at the curriculum and pupils' work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including any free-text comments.
- No responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils were received.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Ruddy

Ofsted Inspector

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