

Beccles Primary Academy

Ellough Road, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 7AB

Inspection dates

13–14 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Standards are not improving quickly enough. Attainment remained below national averages in reading and mathematics in both key stages in 2016 and 2017.
- Assessment is not effective in informing leaders, including governors, how well pupils are achieving. The inconsistency of information systems makes it difficult for leaders, including subject leaders, to identify priorities that will improve outcomes.
- Most-able pupils are not provided with levels of challenge that ensure they can achieve the higher standards of which they are capable.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable. This is because weaknesses in teaching have not been tackled rigorously enough and some underperformance remains.
- Reading skills, particularly at key stage 2, remain lower than they should be due to historically weak teaching.
- Reasoning skills in mathematics are not well developed. Pupils are provided with insufficient opportunities to practise these skills or apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding.
- Behaviour in classrooms is generally appropriate, although attention can wane if activities are not suitably matched to pupils' needs. Around the school, during less structured times, pupils can be overly boisterous and loud.
- Persistent absence has improved and is now slightly below national averages. However, it remains high for disadvantaged pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are not achieving as well as they should be. This is because their progress is not a key focus.
- Parents hold mixed views about the school, some very negative, particularly on behaviour.

The school has the following strengths

- In early years, children get off to a good start to their education. They make consistently good progress from their typically low starting points.
- School leaders have been supported by the trust, particularly with performance data and leadership capacity. This is beginning to show impact.
- Pupils' social and emotional needs are well met. Leaders identify, monitor and provide support to pupils so that they are potentially ready to successfully learn and thrive.
- Pupils achieve well in the Year 1 phonics check.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - refining and sharpening the school’s chosen tracking and assessment systems so that leaders can more easily measure progress and identify key priorities
 - speeding up rates of improvement by closely measuring the impact of plans and interventions, and prioritising accurately
 - working closely with parents and the school community to share the work of the school and challenge any misconceptions.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that outcomes rapidly improve by:
 - rigorously challenging and tackling teachers’ underperformance
 - sharing the good practice that already exists in some classes more widely
 - monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and acting swiftly when this is not effective
 - using assessment information to more accurately plan learning that meets pupils’ needs.
- Raise attainment and improve rates of progress in pupils’ outcomes by:
 - ensuring that all staff have high expectations for what pupils can achieve, particularly the most able, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEN and/or disabilities
 - continuing to focus on core reading and mathematical reasoning skills across the school in order to close gaps in pupils’ knowledge and understanding
 - provide training for staff to improve their subject knowledge, particularly in phonics and mathematics
 - improving attendance for vulnerable pupils so that they are in school more often.
- Improve behaviour by:
 - developing and expecting high standards of self-discipline in pupils when they are not being directed by adults
 - challenging inappropriate language and interactions
 - planning engaging lessons which meet the needs of different groups of pupils so that they remain focused and engaged.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Although leaders are ambitious for the pupils, they have not held high enough expectations of what they can achieve. Nor have they worked effectively to improve standards quickly at Beccles Primary Academy. As a result, attainment has remained stubbornly below national averages, particularly at the higher standards and greater depth.
- Middle leaders are not raising standards rapidly enough in their respective areas. Some leaders lack knowledge and understanding about pupil performance in their subjects. Consequently, they are unable to take appropriate actions to provide targeted support where needed or hold staff to account for pupils' outcomes.
- Senior leaders' detailed improvement plans have been slow to show impact. School systems do not facilitate the easy measurement of progress, which means that it is difficult to ascertain which actions are most effective. This has affected the speed and rigour of school improvement.
- Weaknesses in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment remain, despite leaders attempting to tackle underperformance by providing a rigorous monitoring and support programme for those staff who need it. Leaders have been slow at times in holding staff to account for underperformance. As a result, not all pupils receive teaching that is good enough and this has impacted on outcomes over time. The school has been hindered by challenges when recruiting staff.
- The tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress is fragmented and inefficient. Various systems have been implemented and continue to be trialled and run alongside each other. Some of these are systems promoted by the trust and others have been selected by the school. As a result, leaders are unable to identify quickly pupils or groups at risk of underachievement and find it difficult to measure the impact of their actions.
- Parental views about the school gathered during the inspection and in surveys undertaken by the school show mixed views. For example, one parent represented the views of several when she reported: 'My child is very happy here. The school has improved considerably over the past few years.' Others are very disgruntled, threatening to remove their child from the school as a result of poor behaviour or because they do not feel that their child's needs are being met.
- Additional funding provided to support disadvantaged pupils is used to provide a range of extra activities and adult support. These include a 'fresh start' programme in Years 5 and 6 which targets basic skills. While these activities are clearly documented and targeted, with anecdotal examples provided of the positive effect that they are having on pupils' attitudes to learning, their impact on outcomes is not always clearly measured.
- The funding provided for those pupils with SEN and/or disabilities is monitored by the part-time special needs coordinator (SENCo). She documents the impact of planned interventions and therefore knows, in general terms, which are most effective. It is acknowledged by the leader that progress for these pupils needs to be more

systematically monitored.

- The physical education (PE) and sport additional funding is managed by a proactive instructor who has introduced a range of extra physical activities and opportunities for the pupils. For example, the 'This Girl Can' programme has been introduced to promote girls' participation in sport. The instructor also leads the school's programme of extra-curricular activities. Participation in sport has increased significantly for all groups as a result of these planned interventions and activities, which are much appreciated by the pupils.
- The school's curriculum covers all of the required subjects, many of which are studied as part of topics or themes. Pupils at the school currently are focused on the different countries taking part in the World Cup. Pupils report that they enjoy this approach but feel that they do not do it enough. Work in books confirms this view in some year groups, with adequate, but limited, evidence of depth of study in some of the foundation subjects. Others have a good range of evidence showing the clear development of skills and knowledge over several lessons.
- There is a strong team spirit at the school, with all staff members working closely together to meet the needs of their pupils. This has been particularly effective in supporting pupils' well-being and social and emotional needs. A thorough programme of professional development is provided for staff and governors. Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are well supported and mentored.
- School leaders know and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their self-evaluation and school improvement documents are accurate and thorough. However, clear milestones and systems for checking and measuring the impact of actions taken are not always evident.
- Monitoring and evaluation is undertaken regularly by leaders at all levels in the school and middle leaders are receiving training to develop their skills. As a result, historic underachievement is being tackled, with improvements to rates of progress now evident in a number of year groups. Nonetheless, leaders do not yet use data incisively enough to measure progress in their areas to speed up this recent improvement in pupil achievement.
- School leaders have been supported by the trust, particularly with pupil performance data, systems and leadership capacity. This support is beginning to show impact. For example, the trust has provided a part-time associate assistant headteacher to increase leadership capacity and take on the responsibilities of the substantive assistant headteacher during his absence.

Governance

- Governors work closely with school leaders and are involved in the life of the school. They fulfil their statutory requirements, including those on information that they need to publish on the school's website and on checking how the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, SEN and/or disabilities and PE and sport is being used. While they have checked provision for these groups, they have not been effective in ensuring that the funding is impacting on improving pupils' outcomes.
- Governors monitor leaders' actions and can provide evidence of both support and challenge. However, as the school's results show, governors have been too slow to

demonstrate impact on improvement.

- Governor training has been undertaken and governors are proactive in seeking advice and professional development to improve their knowledge and understanding of governance. This includes recent training with other school staff on the 'Prevent' duty, which is the government's training programme to prevent radicalisation and extremism.
- Safeguarding is a key responsibility of governors and the chair of governors currently holds this role. She has worked closely with school leaders to ensure that all systems, procedures and requirements are robustly carried out.
- A pupil premium review was undertaken in January 2018 at the trust's request. This is starting to help governors to evaluate the provision and impact of pupil premium funding more rigorously.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Systems and procedures are rigorous, including those for the safe recruitment of staff members, governors and volunteers. Appropriate records are kept and stored securely.
- There is a culture of safeguarding at the school. All staff are alert to safety considerations and are proactive in monitoring the school site and reporting any causes for concern.
- The person responsible for safeguarding and child protection is also a member of the senior leadership team. School systems and procedures are thorough and the whole staff team is proactive in safeguarding pupils. This includes following up concerns with outside agencies in a timely and robust manner.
- Staff receive regular training and development on child protection and safeguarding. This has included the 'Prevent' duty training along with governors.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are too variable across the school. While in some year groups teachers are clearly focused on raising standards and successfully diminish gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, in other classes the teaching that is planned and delivered does not meet the pupils' needs and progress slows. Work in books reflects these inconsistencies over time.
- Teachers' levels of subject knowledge are too variable. Some do not have the knowledge or skills that they need to support pupils well. This is particularly the case for phonics in key stage 2, where some pupils with very basic gaps in their phonics knowledge are being provided with inaccurate modelling of sounds by adults.
- Weak teaching over time and low expectations have impacted on pupils' progress and attainment. This is evident in historic published data, current pupil performance data, work in books and monitoring of teaching and learning by school leaders.
- Work planned for the most able pupils shows additional challenge in some cases. However, pupils report that this is still too easy for them and they are quite passive in accepting this as normal. Attainment at the higher levels is low compared to national

averages, which reinforces the view that the potential of this group of pupils is not being met.

- Low prior-attaining pupils often have large gaps in their basic skills due to prior weak teaching. This makes it difficult for them, at times, to access the work planned for them. For example, a Year 1 pupil was unable to access work on adding two numbers together as she couldn't read the number 10.
- Teachers do not routinely use assessment data to methodically plug gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. This results in some groups moving through the curriculum without having solid foundations in place on which to build. These gaps, which are barriers to learning, become apparent as these pupils struggle to access or complete work set, and this slows their progress.
- Support staff are generally well deployed and used effectively to support individuals and groups of pupils. Many of them work one-to-one with vulnerable pupils. They undertake regular training and are very much partners with teaching staff. They know their pupils well.
- In the majority of classes, questioning is used effectively to extend learning and provide clarification for pupils. There is a focus on extending pupils' vocabulary. In a Year 4 class, pupils learned about Thomas Edison during a reading comprehension activity. The teacher explained key vocabulary in advance of the session which, subsequently, enabled them to access the text.
- Feedback is used effectively in all classes so that pupils are given clear guidance as to how to improve. Staff and pupils understand and follow the school's marking and feedback policy closely. Pupils are also familiar with different types of feedback, including that from their peers, which is undertaken thoroughly following clear guidance.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. This is a strength of the school. A number of programmes have been set up to support pupils' well-being and social and emotional needs so that they are ready to learn. These are rigorous, well-delivered and much valued by both pupils and parents.
- Dedicated staff members are allocated well-being responsibilities, which include daily 'check-ins' for those pupils who need this. Clear monitoring records are kept which can demonstrate improvements in attitude, behaviour, attendance and subsequent improving performance over time. This supports pupils' needs and welfare.
- All aspects of pupils' welfare are given a high priority by staff and governors. Pupils and their families are known and supported by the school where needed. Healthy, positive lifestyles are promoted, including daily lunches with a range of fresh fruit and vegetables. A range of sports clubs and opportunities encourage pupils to try new activities and keep physically active.
- Pupils attending alternative provision are closely monitored for personal development, welfare, behaviour and attendance by one of the school's senior leaders. Rigorous

records are kept, including some progress information, for this small group of pupils.

- Pupils report that they feel safe in school. The school site has been fully risk assessed and staff are vigilant in ensuring that the school's rigorous safety policies are adhered to. Most parents also feel that their children are safe. Online safety has been taught to pupils and they are aware of strategies to keep themselves safe on the internet and when using social media.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is given a high focus by the school. For example, visits and trips are provided in order to expose pupils to cultural opportunities that expand their life experiences. The Art Club will display some of their work in Beccles town centre later this term, making links with their wider community.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Most pupils demonstrate compliant behaviour during lessons and when under adult supervision. Learning is, however, sometimes affected in class by low-level disruption, particularly when activities do not engage pupils well. During less structured times, such as lunchtimes and at the end of the school day when pupils are not directly supervised, behaviour can be inappropriate.
- Conduct is generally appropriate, but some pupils do not show proper respect to adults in the way that they respond or interact. Inappropriate ways of speaking to adults or each other are sometimes left unchecked, so pupils do not learn how to improve.
- A minority of parents and pupils have concerns about behaviour and bullying. While school records and case studies show an improving picture over time, during the inspection some incidents of poor behaviour, outside of those involving pupils with additional needs, were noted. These were largely dealt with effectively by school staff, but, for some parents, the perception of inappropriate behaviour at the school clearly remains.
- Attendance and punctuality have been an issue for the school historically, but improved in 2017 and continue to improve. The headteacher and her team have rightly focused on ensuring that pupils are in school as often as possible. Their approach has included rewards for 100% attendance and fining families for unauthorised absences which, of course, impact on pupils' achievement.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils, although improving, remains a work in progress, particularly in reducing rates of persistent absence, which remain far higher than those for all pupils. A number of strategies are being used by the school to tackle this, for example by inviting these pupils to breakfast club so that they are in school punctually.
- A very small number of pupils attend school on a part-time timetable. This is used as a behaviour strategy by the school. Case studies show these pupils are well supported and monitored closely by senior leaders and are ready for readmission to school or alternative placements as swiftly as possible.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016 and 2017, attainment outcomes for combined reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 were well below national averages. Reading attainment was particularly low. Some improvements in writing were made in 2017, which brought attainment in that subject closer to national averages.
- At key stage 1, pupils' attainment in 2017 was well below national averages in reading, writing, mathematics and science. There was a similar picture in 2016. Results in the phonics screening check in Year 1 improved from a low starting point in 2016 to become broadly average in 2017.
- In key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils' progress from their starting points was low in reading and mathematics in 2017, with any differences in attainment between them and their peers nationally diminishing too slowly. This was also the case for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Many pupils lack basic skills and have gaps in their knowledge and understanding as a result of historic underachievement. This is particularly obvious in reading. During the inspection, a number of pupils from different year groups read with inspectors. Reading was also a focus during visits to classrooms. It was noted that many pupils, mostly in key stage 2, did not have as well-developed fluency, expression and confidence as would normally be expected.
- Lower attaining pupils do not develop their basic skills as much as they could. This is because they have limited vocabulary, their reading ability is weaker and their knowledge of number is less developed. For example, during the inspection, some were observed struggling to access the tasks before them. Leaders recognise this and have subsequently implemented a structured reading programme to target these gaps in learning on a daily basis. There is also a basic skills 'catch-up' programme for Years 5 and 6 which is providing daily English and mathematics sessions for targeted pupils.
- Current pupils are starting to accelerate their progress. School assessment information, work in books, leaders' observations, monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment over time and inspectors' visits to lessons indicate that a more urgent approach to closing gaps for all groups is developing. This includes a strong focus on English and mathematics.
- Phonics is well taught at key stage 1 and outcomes at the end of Year 1 in the phonics screening check have been close to national averages for two years. Current school information indicates that this is likely to remain similar in 2018. This is despite children's very low starting points and demonstrates strong progress and effective teaching in early years and Year 1.
- Science results in both 2016 and 2017 were above the national average.

Early years provision

Good

- Children in both the Nursery and Reception classes enjoy their learning. There are a range of well-planned activities, indoors and outside the classroom, which are carefully

targeted to meet their needs.

- Adults focus on developing children's language and vocabulary. This ensures that those children who enter the setting without these basic skills catch up quickly and extend their knowledge and understanding. Most children enter the early years with skills well below those that are typical. By the end of the early years, the proportion of children leaving the setting having achieved a good level of development is similar to their peers nationally. This represents good progress and prepares children well for Year 1.
- The early years leader is knowledgeable and professional. She knows the children and their families well and uses children's starting points to plan relevant and interesting activities. She uses assessment information to identify where children are falling behind, as well as their next steps in learning. As a result, disadvantaged children are making good progress and differences between their attainment and that of their peers have closed.
- There are high expectations for behaviour, supported by exciting activities and clear routines, in the early years. This encourages independence, curiosity, collaboration and joyful exploration. Children are focused and purposeful, clearly enjoying their time in the setting and working well together.
- Staff work closely as a team, planning and supporting children's individual needs and interests. They are skilled at questioning and modelling correct language and sounds.
- Welfare and safety is given a high priority in the setting and children are also aware of safety issues and expectations when using equipment.
- The school's assessment system is used effectively to record and celebrate children's achievements. This is shared with parents. Parents also contribute to this log, which is linked to the early learning goals of the early years curriculum.
- The outside area is substantial and forms an essential part of the provision. A significant minority of children do not currently choose to access this area. Leaders are looking at ways to make it more inviting and interesting. During the inspection, a large section of the outdoor area was fenced off to prepare children for the transition to year one. This limited their opportunities to develop gross motor skills, use the larger equipment and work outdoors.
- Children's opportunities to access computers and information technology in the setting are limited.

School details

Unique reference number	142017
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10046620

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

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	273
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracy Driscoll
Headteacher	Heather Thorne
Telephone number	01502 713 281
Website	www.becclesprimaryacademy.org
Email address	office@becclesprimaryacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

Information about this school

- Beccles Primary Academy converted to academy status in 2015 as part of the Reach2 Multi-Academy Trust. The current headteacher was appointed at that time. When its predecessor school, Crowcroft Community Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to require improvement.
- The trust supports the leadership of the school, providing training for staff and moderation opportunities for staff to check their assessments.
- During the long-term absence of one of the school's senior leaders, the trust has provided an associate school leader on a part-time basis.
- The school has its own governing body.
- In 2017, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics.
- A small number of pupils on roll at the school attend alternative provision.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have additional support to meet their special educational

needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, a range of evidence was gathered, including lesson observations in all classes, many undertaken jointly with school leaders. Work in pupils' books was considered, alongside current in-school pupil performance and assessment data. Historic published data for 2017 was also analysed.
- The lead inspector spoke with two regional directors from the trust and the chair of governors, plus one other governor representative from the governing body.
- Inspectors talked with pupils, including members of the school council. They also heard pupils from a number of year groups read, both in class and using reading books.
- Nine responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire were considered as well as 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors held face-to-face discussions with a number of parents during the inspection, and 144 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were also analysed. One submission by letter and 37 free-text responses from parents were considered.
- Documentation held by the school was scrutinised. This included safeguarding and child protection information, behaviour logs and the school's self-evaluation and school improvement documents.

Inspection team

Jacqueline Bell-Cook, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Morley	Ofsted Inspector
John Crane	Ofsted Inspector

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