

Inspection of a good school: Birkdale High School

Windy Harbour Road, Birkdale, Southport, Merseyside PR8 3DT

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 June 2022

Outcome

Birkdale High School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of this welcoming and tight-knit school community. They build strong relationships with each other and with staff. Pupils said that they enjoy coming to school because it is a happy place where they can make many friends.

Pupils feel safe when they are in school. They know who to speak with if they are worried or upset. Pupils told inspectors that bullying of any sort is not common. They said that, usually, staff handle these incidents well when they do occur.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons matches the high expectations that their teachers have for them. Pupils listen well, join in enthusiastically when invited by staff and concentrate thoroughly on their work. Throughout the day, corridors are quiet because pupils are working purposefully in their classrooms. Pupils act sensibly and respectfully towards one another during social times.

Leaders and trustees are ambitious for all pupils. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), progress well through the ambitious and innovative curriculum.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities. Leaders strive to capture the interests of every pupil, including those who are disadvantaged, with the variety of extra-curricular clubs and activities. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is especially popular with pupils.

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

Leaders, including trustees, have ensured that all pupils, including those with SEND, have access to a broad and ambitious curriculum. For example, leaders and trustees are successfully increasing the proportion of pupils who study modern foreign languages and the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects.

Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, progress well through key stage 3 curriculums in most subjects. Subject leaders have thought carefully about the order in which the content should be taught. This allows pupils to build their knowledge logically and securely over time. However, in a small number of subjects in key stage 3, leaders have not designed curriculums as well. As a result, pupils are not able to deepen their knowledge of essential concepts sufficiently well over time.

Teachers have strong, and in some cases excellent, subject knowledge. This gives authority to their teaching and helps them to explain concepts clearly to pupils. Staff take opportunities to make links between current learning and earlier topics. This helps pupils to remember what they have learned previously.

Teachers check regularly on pupils' learning. They use assessment information well to identify and correct pupils' misconceptions and to adapt the curriculum to cover any learning that pupils may have missed or forgotten. Pupils use this information conscientiously to improve their work.

Around the school, pupils are polite and well-mannered. They follow the school routines well, such as saying 'thank you' to adults who have helped them in any way. Typically, they wear their uniform smartly and move around the school between lessons quietly and without fuss.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. Leaders ensure that all staff understand the specific needs of individual pupils. This effective support helps these pupils to progress through the same ambitious subject curriculums as their peers.

Leaders have effective systems to identify pupils whose reading knowledge is weak. These systems enable leaders to pinpoint and remedy the specific problems that individual pupils face with their reading. This support helps most pupils to become more confident and fluent readers. Leaders have introduced several schemes to encourage all pupils to read for pleasure. As a result, a stronger reading culture is developing across the school.

Leaders have an established and effective personal development curriculum in place. This curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to learn about and discuss a wide range of issues. Pupils told inspectors that they found visits from outside speakers most memorable, especially when they spoke about local issues of concern to young people, for example, knife crime. Pupils receive age-appropriate sex, relationships and health education.

Pupils benefit from a range of careers education, information, advice and guidance. For example, they receive independent careers advice. Added to this, leaders provide opportunities for older pupils to meet with local employers and visit further education and sixth-form colleges in the area.

Staff appreciate how leaders and trustees have taken steps to reduce their workload. Trustees hold leaders to account effectively and think strategically about what is best in the long term for the pupils and staff of Birkdale High School.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have well-established strategies for ensuring that safeguarding concerns are identified quickly so that appropriate and timely action is taken. Leaders ensure that safeguarding training is thorough and that staff are kept up to date with the most recent developments.

Staff know how to spot the signs that may indicate that a pupil is at risk of harm. Staff share any concerns in a timely manner. Leaders work well with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families get the help that they need.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the personal development curriculum and through assemblies.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a minority of subjects in key stage 3, leaders have not designed a curriculum that supports pupils to learn about these subjects in sufficient depth. As a result, some pupils do not acquire the essential knowledge in some aspects of the curriculum as securely as they should. Leaders should ensure that, in these subjects, curriculums are designed so that pupils gain the same rich body of knowledge as they do in other subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2013.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 137297 |
| Local authority | Sefton |
| Inspection number | 10240373 |
| Type of school | Secondary Comprehensive |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Boys |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 815 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Paul Blott |
| Headteacher | Gil Bourgade |
| Website | www.birkdalehigh.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 18 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at three registered providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with trustees, the headteacher, other senior leaders and some subject leaders.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's records of safeguarding checks and referrals to the local authority. Inspectors spoke with staff about how they keep pupils safe. Inspectors also asked the pupils how they keep themselves safe and what to do if they have concerns.

- Inspectors held discussions with staff and considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils from all year groups and considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of the parents and carers who responded to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text responses.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss curriculums, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors also reviewed curriculums and considered samples of pupils’ work from some other subjects.

Inspection team

Timothy Gartside, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Pippa Jackson Maitland

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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