

Inspection of The Birley Academy

Birley Lane, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S12 3BP

Inspection dates: 14–15 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are safe and happy at this school. Pupils' achievement is improving but too many still do not achieve to their potential. Teachers have planned a new approach to learning which helps pupils to remember more. However, pupils are not always challenged about the quality of their work. Because of this, teachers' expectations of pupils vary.

Most pupils behave well in lessons. But a few do not. This sometimes gets in the way of learning. A minority of pupils do not cooperate with teachers' requests during social times. Not all pupils follow the school's personal presentation policy as they should. Pupils say that bullying is rare. If it does happen, staff act to help them so that it stops.

Leaders are working hard to encourage more pupils to improve their attendance. But leaders know there is more work to do to improve attendance further.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported in their learning. Disadvantaged pupils are being supported too. Teachers receive lots of training. They have the skills they need to improve the quality of education which all pupils receive.

Staff are happy to work at the school and pupils say they enjoy being at The Birley Academy. Pupils have lots of opportunities to take part in after-school clubs and other activities.

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

The quality of education requires improvement. Pupils' achievement is improving, although some do not achieve as they should. Teachers plan learning, so pupils have chances to revisit learned knowledge. But some pupils are not remembering as much important knowledge as they need to. This is because teachers' expectations of some pupils are not high enough. Pupils who are not challenged about the quality of their work are not as good at remembering knowledge. Pupils told us they do not always feel as challenged as they would like to be.

In all subjects, teachers cover topics and important concepts in an order which helps pupils to learn. However, in some subjects, they do not always check pupils' understanding throughout each lesson, for example in mathematics and science. Because of this, some pupils fall behind in their learning. Gaps in understanding are not always identified until pupils take tests. In other subjects, such as modern foreign languages, design and technology and art, teachers have higher expectations of pupils. They make sure pupils understand the learning and complete work to a high standard. They also use regular testing to identify how well pupils have remembered and understood key concepts.

Disadvantaged pupils' work is comparable to that of other pupils. Most of the time they get the support they need. Pupils with SEND receive high-quality support in classrooms if they need it. Leaders have reorganised the SEND provision. They make sure all pupils, including those with SEND, have the same opportunities.

Most pupils have positive attitudes in lessons and behave well. Many produce high-quality work. However, some pupils do not always respond to teachers' requests. This is particularly the case during social times. A minority of pupils behave in a truculent manner. This minority do not always meet the standards the school sets. This can spoil the learning environment for the majority. However, pupils say behaviour has improved over the past three years.

Not all pupils attend school as often as they should. The attendance team works hard to support pupils and families so that attendance improves. Leaders know there is more work to do to improve attendance further and reduce the number of pupils who do not attend school regularly enough.

The school provides pupils with lots of opportunities to develop their confidence. Pupils enjoy these opportunities and appreciate them. Leaders are keen to develop pupils' interest in the school council and the subject ambassador roles offered to them.

School and trust leaders have been over-positive about the impact of their work so far. But they have identified the most important areas for improvement. Pupils, staff and many parents recognise this. The school has improved over the past three years. Pupils told inspectors this. The headteacher has made sure any changes have been well thought out and they are sustainable. Leaders at all levels are developing their practice. But there is more work to do so that leaders' intentions are always carried out in lessons. The school is in a position to make the further improvements it needs to make.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are trained to identify if pupils may be at risk of harm. There is a strong culture of safeguarding, which means pupils feel safe and looked after while they are in school. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils. Leaders have put in place effective systems for teachers and staff. This allows them to make quick referrals to the safeguarding team if they have any urgent concerns.

The school works with external agencies and with the local authority to protect vulnerable pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' expectations of pupils are inconsistent across and within subjects. Pupils are not always challenged when their work falls below expected standards. Consequently, there are gaps in some pupils' learning and not all pupils are remembering important knowledge. Leaders should ensure that levels of challenge and expectation are consistently high for all pupils, across all subjects, so that more of them achieve to the levels they are capable of.
- A minority of pupils do not meet the standards expected of them in terms of their behaviour and attitudes. As a result, at times, learning is disrupted and during social times their behaviour spoils the school environment for others. Leaders should ensure that all pupils are challenged consistently through the school's behaviour systems so that behaviour and attitudes improve, and exclusions are further reduced.
- Too many pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should despite the efforts of the school to engage with parents and pupils. Because of this, those pupils who are regularly absent often struggle to catch up with their work and do not achieve to their potential. Leaders should continue to work hard with pupils and parents to improve attendance further and reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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

Unique reference number	143963
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	10121648
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,114
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	David Warman
Headteacher	Gina Newton
Website	www.birleysecondaryacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Birley Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 February 2017. When its predecessor school, Birley Community College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement overall.
- Since conversion to an academy, the school has undergone a significant number of staffing changes, including changes to senior and curriculum leadership.
- A number of pupils attend alternative provision. The school makes use of Shaped, OSMIS and a number of local authority commissioned placements.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Discussions were held with the headteacher, trust leaders, senior leaders, curriculum leaders for English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages and also with a range of leaders across the school.
- We met with members of the governing body.
- The subjects which were considered as part of the inspection through the deep dive methodology were English, mathematics, science and modern foreign

languages. As part of the deep dive methodology, we visited lessons, talked to the curriculum leader for each subject, held discussions with the teachers and pupils from the lessons visited and scrutinised pupils' work.

- To inspect safeguarding in the school, we scrutinised the school's single central register relating to the safe recruitment of those adults who work with pupils, along with records relating to safeguarding. We also held discussions with staff and pupils as well as with the designated safeguarding leaders for the school.

Inspection team

Barry Found, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Bernard Clark	Ofsted Inspector
Louise Greatrex	Ofsted Inspector

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