

Inspection of Birchen Coppice Academy

Woodbury Road, Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY11 7JJ

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

'Focus on family' is a value lived out in this school. Parents, carers and pupils spoke of the many ways that leaders and staff help them. They say that it makes a real difference to them. They like this. They do not like how behaviour often 'kicks off' and bullying and racist behaviour is often seen and heard. They say it is stopping pupils from learning and hurting their feelings. Inspectors agree.

Pupils are safe. Leaders have recently made changes to make sure the unacceptable behaviour, bullying and intolerance end. These are beginning to make a difference. But the recent changes are not embedded across the school or followed consistently by all staff.

Leaders have many strategies to boost and celebrate attendance following the national lockdown. For example, the daily walking bus and families sharing breakfast in class are popular. These are helping more pupils to be in school, on time and ready to learn.

Pupils go on a wide range of trips and visits, including residential visits. These are back up and running following the COVID-19 pandemic, as are school clubs. The weekly forest school sessions are firm favourites. Pupils spoke of seeing a fox with such excitement and awe in their voices.

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

Early reading is planned and sequenced in a way that helps pupils build a bank of letter sounds and words up over time. Younger children in Nursery, Reception and Year 1 get a strong start in this and read well. However, the teaching of phonics is inconsistent. Lower-ability pupils do not always read books that are closely matched to the letter sounds they know. This stops them becoming confident and fluent readers. Pupils use what they learn in phonics to help them read words. Some, but not all, pupils read fluently, add expression to their voice and can talk about the meaning of the text.

Pupils appreciate the reading corners in the classroom. They like the stories that teachers often read to them. Pupils say, 'This is a special time together. Teachers use voices and expression to bring the story to life.'

Pupils told inspectors that lessons are often disrupted by pupils' behaviour. Pupils value the things that are now in place to make behaviour better, such as 'zone boards,' 'regulation tables' and 'getting parked'. They say that behaviour is improving but not quickly enough and not for all pupils. They are right. Most staff appreciate the new way that behaviour is being managed and say that leaders give help and support when needed. The youngest children in the early years show that they can follow rules and routines. They are helpful and kind to each other.

Leaders and staff give children in the early years a great start to school life. Leaders ensure the calm and purposeful environment provides learning opportunities for all children. Staff's focus on talk and interactions is making a real difference. Children are happy, chat about their learning and interact well together.

The pastoral team is a real asset to the school. The members of the team know pupils, families and the community well. They go above and beyond in helping everyone to have what they need to learn and grow together. This is helping more pupils to attend regularly and to have a calm start to each day. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are quickly identified and their needs met through a wide range of appropriate adaptations to how the curriculum is delivered. As a result, pupils with SEND are making progress in many subjects.

Leaders are in the process of improving the curriculum. English, mathematics, science and history are structured and assessed in a sequenced manner. This is less clear for all other subjects. Leaders have put in place a new way of working for these subjects, which gives an order to what should be taught and when. Teachers are following this new way, but because it is so new, pupils do not talk readily about what they know and remember. Not enough pupils are working at the expected standard in all subjects.

The new curriculum structure is helping teachers' subject knowledge and their workload. Teachers say, 'We are a good team. We care for, help and support each other.'

The Victoria Academies Trust has lived out its values of loyalty and tenacity in its support and commitment to Birchen Coppice Academy. Those with responsibility for governance are dedicated to making things better. They look closely at what is and is not working and act with decisiveness to make changes. The COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted the journey to improvement, but it is now back on track.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils learn how to be safe in their body and their mind. Pupils spoke of calming exercises and having time to unwind. They understand the concepts of control and consent. They can talk about what being a good friend means. One pupil said, 'If someone is controlling you, it is like you are rag doll with someone pulling all the strings.'

Leaders are rigorous in recording anything related to safeguarding. Checks show that staff are safe to work with children. Staff training makes sure that staff note all the 'little things,' and leaders put the right help and support in place.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In many classrooms, and at times on the playground, pupils do not behave well and do not treat each other with respect and tolerance. When this happens, pupils' learning is hindered, their play is disrupted and their feelings are hurt. Although records show that adults deal with these incidents, and they are getting fewer, they are still happening. Leaders must continue to provide the pastoral care, monitor the new behaviour policy and provide further training and support to make sure that leaders' high expectations for pupils' behaviour are understood by all, consistently applied by staff and quickly bring about improvements.
- The teaching of phonics is inconsistent and lower-ability readers do not always read books closely matched to the letter sounds they know. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that they continue to monitor how well all adults deliver phonics sessions and provide further training and support where needed.
- The recently introduced curriculum structure is very new and not embedded within subjects and across year groups. This means pupils are not building on their prior learning in a way that helps them to know more and remember more. Senior leaders should ensure that staff receive further training to enable them to understand how each subject progresses from the early years onwards and to have the knowledge and skills to deliver it well in the classroom in a way that secures pupils' progress and knowledge and understanding.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted leaders' actions to bring about the required improvement in many areas. Leaders have shown they have the capacity to change things for the better, but this is not making enough difference to behaviour and outcomes for pupils. Leaders must use monitoring, professional development and continued focus on parental partnership to maintain the early momentum demonstrated during this inspection.

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

Unique reference number	144650
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10227750
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	254
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gurinder Singh Josan
Headteacher	Louise Waller
Website	https://www.birchencoppiceacademy.org.uk/worcs/primary/birchencoppice
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- This was the first routine inspection 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 the directors of schools for the trust, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the Victoria Academies Trust.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics, history and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at books and spoke to pupils about some other subjects.
- Inspectors listened to a sample of pupils read.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime. They spoke formally with groups of pupils as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's online parent, pupil and staff surveys.
- Inspectors met with staff, spoke to parents at the school gate and met groups of parents in school.
- The lead inspector considered documentation that came in from parents during the inspection and spoke to parents on the phone.
- Inspectors met with leaders about the school's safeguarding procedures. Inspectors reviewed policies and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors spoke to pupils, parents and staff about pupils' safety.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of trust and local governing body meetings and information on the school's website.

Inspection team

Kirsty Foulkes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Marilyn Mottram

Ofsted Inspector

Kate Wilcock

Ofsted Inspector

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