

# Inspection of a good school: Birtenshaw

Darwen Road, Bromley Cross, Bolton, Lancashire BL7 9AB

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Inspection dates:

17 and 18 November 2022

## **Outcome**

Birtenshaw continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils flourish at Birtenshaw School. They are happy and settled. Leaders and staff have created a friendly and welcoming environment where every pupil is nurtured, valued and supported to be as independent as possible. Pupils gain confidence, make friends and enjoy their education. The warm and trusting relationships that staff foster with pupils ensure that they feel safe.

The high expectations that staff have for every pupil ensure that they achieve their goals. Parents and carers told inspectors how their children had achieved far more than they could ever have hoped for.

Pupils learn how to manage their emotions and behaviour. Staff manage incidents of challenging behaviour very well to ensure that learning time is not lost. Staff also show pupils how to be kind to each other and how to communicate any worries that they might have to a safe adult. Leaders deal effectively with any rare cases of bullying or harmful name-calling.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of activities that promote their personal development and enhance the curriculum. For example, pupils enjoy equine therapy, gym activities, yoga and swimming to support their physical and mental health. Visits to local supermarkets help pupils to shop independently, learn how to manage money and practise their communication skills.

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

The curriculum is ambitious and carefully designed to fully meet the varying needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who attend the school. In most subjects, pupils' knowledge and skills build on what has been taught before. Pupils apply what they know with increasing independence. However, in other subjects, the curriculum is not as well developed. For example, in the early years, some aspects of the curriculum are still in the early stages of development. This is also the case for some discrete subjects that some pupils access.

Teachers use effective assessment strategies to allow them to establish starting points for pupils and to shape their future teaching. This ensures that pupils' needs are identified early. Teachers adapt their teaching of the curriculum to meet pupils' different needs.

Communication and language development are threaded throughout all aspects of school life. Teachers and staff have expert knowledge in this area. They use a wide range of communication aids and resources to allow pupils to have a voice, make choices and communicate with their peers.

There is a strong culture of reading in the school. Songs, sign-along sessions, poems and books are the foundation for teaching in every class from the early years through to the sixth form. A sharp focus on phonics ensures that pupils in the early stages of reading get the knowledge that they need to become fluent readers.

Pupils have opportunities to experience activities and learning beyond the classroom. Pupils and students learn map reading, cooking and camping skills through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Children in the early years explore the local environment and learn about people and places. The celebrations of cultural and religious festivals enable pupils to learn about difference and respect.

Pupils' personal development is supported well. They are immersed in a wide range of activities that not only develop their physical health but also improve their confidence, physical strength, teamwork and friendships. For example, students in the sixth form said that their work with a gym coach has helped them to form friendships alongside developing their physical strength.

Pupils' education, health and care plans are used effectively by teachers and staff to set small, achievable targets for each pupil. This enables pupils to build their understanding and independence over time. Some pupils achieve nationally recognised qualifications including functional skills and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network awards. Work experience and the careers curriculum ensure that pupils are ready for their next steps into work, education, training or residential accommodation.

Leaders work with staff and other professionals to ensure pupils' sensory needs are met. The procedures for managing behaviour are followed consistently by school staff. Pupils learn to use their personalised sensory aids and resources to manage their own emotions and behaviour. This ensures that there is very little low-level disruption in class. Pupils move around school in a calm and quiet manner.

Leaders engage well with staff. There is a strong sense of teamwork. Staff said they feel valued by leaders, who ensure their workload is manageable.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff training is a priority. Staff have a thorough induction that ensures they will know how to identify and manage any safeguarding concerns. This means that staff are highly vigilant to any physical, behavioural or emotional change in pupils that may indicate a cause for concern. Leaders work closely with external agencies, including the local authority, to keep pupils safe.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and in the community. They understand how to raise any worries with a trusted adult, including when working online.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The curriculum in some subjects is still in the early stages of development. In these subjects, pupils' progress through the curriculum is not as strong as it is in other curriculum areas. Leaders should ensure that they establish well-ordered curriculums in all subjects so that pupils are better able to build their understanding over time.

## **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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 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.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105280
<b>Local authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241782
<b>Type of school</b>	All-through special
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	80
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	24
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Donna Thompson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kaylie Crompton
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.birtenshaw.org.uk">www.birtenshaw.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	28 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has increased from 50 to 80.
- An additional, newly built, school building has been completed on the same site. It will be used by all pupils. During this inspection, some sixth-form students were utilising a building that is usually used for the enrichment service, which is part of the Birtenshaw group. Students will soon move back into the school building.
- Leaders do not use alternative provision.
- The school caters for pupils with a wide range of needs. These include autism spectrum disorder, profound and multiple learning disability and sensory impairment.

## Information about this inspection

- 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 met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the chief executive officer of The Birtenshaw Group, the chair of governors and subject leaders. Inspectors also spoke with a representative from the local authority and other members of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language, including reading; personal, social and health education; and understanding the world. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, listened to pupils read, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- During the inspection, inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. They also spoke with leaders and staff.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents expressed through Ofsted Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff or pupils.

## Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jackie Stillings

His Majesty's Inspector

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