

# Inspection of The Birley Academy

Birley Lane, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S12 3BP

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Inspection dates:

8 and 9 March 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

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

Pupils' experiences at The Birley Academy are mixed. There are good relationships between staff and pupils. However, too many pupils do not enjoy learning. Some pupils use derogatory language. This sometimes leads to fighting. Where leaders identify poor behaviour, they address it. As a result, behaviour at social times is improving.

Behaviour in lessons varies. Pupils often lack focus and do not pay attention to their learning. Too many staff have low expectations of what pupils can achieve and how they behave. They do not get pupils back on track quickly and effectively. Leaders and trustees have clear plans to improve standards and are deeply committed to the school. They know the school well. Leaders have implemented various strategies, including 'the Birley way', which are beginning to make behaviour expectations clearer.

Teachers do not deliver the curriculum consistently well. Some teachers' subject knowledge is not secure. Leaders have provided training to develop subject leaders' knowledge and skills so they can train and support teachers more effectively. This is starting to bring about improvements in most subjects, but this work is at an early stage.

Pupils appreciate the after-school sessions available to them. Staff use these sessions to provide further teaching and support across a range of subjects. Leaders have introduced a careers curriculum. Pupils in Year 10 enjoy participating in work experience. They gain confidence, and learn more about their own talents and interests.

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

The quality of education is inconsistent across the school. In some subjects, leaders clarify what pupils should learn and when. They identify the important concepts that staff should revisit so that pupils remember what they have learned. In other subjects, it is not clear what important knowledge teachers should emphasise, or what small steps they should take to help pupils develop their understanding over time. How well teachers deliver the curriculum also varies widely, and is often poor. Where teaching is weaker, teachers do not explain how new knowledge connects to important concepts. Sometimes, teachers move on too quickly, without having checked that pupils' understanding is secure.

Staff working in the resourced provision provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They identify pupils' needs and make sure pupils get the right intervention. Pupils with SEND in the wider school have mixed experiences in lessons. Some staff are confident in adapting activities so that pupils with SEND achieve the same outcomes as their peers. However, many teachers need further guidance on how to meet the needs of all pupils. Leaders have identified this and are working to provide further training and support.

Leaders identify pupils who are in the early stages of reading. However, they do not gather the right information to understand pupils' individual needs. This means that support with reading is not targeted enough to help pupils catch up quickly.

Staff do not have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Where the curriculum is taught well and expectations are high, behaviour is calm and purposeful. However, in too many lessons, teaching is less effective, and pupils disengage. Some staff are not effective in keeping pupils on track. Where this happens, lesson time is wasted. Some pupils do not learn well.

At social times, pupils' experiences are mixed. The number of suspensions is reducing. However, derogatory language is still too frequent and sometimes leads to fighting. Some pupils do not report their concerns about behaviour because they do not trust that staff will act. Some pupils do not come to school regularly enough. Leaders work with families to try to get pupils attending every day. This is not having a significant impact.

The curriculum for pupils' personal, social and health education covers a range of topics to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Pupils have a sense of fairness and know that people should be treated equally. However, they lack knowledge about the wide range of backgrounds that make up British society. For example, pupils do not know enough about world religions. Leaders are developing a careers programme. Pupils have a range of opportunities to think about the world of work, including work experience. There are a range of clubs and educational visits available to pupils. These extra-curricular activities link to the planned curriculum in school. There is an active school council, and many pupils are keen to be involved in the life of the school.

Leaders support teachers by taking steps to reduce workload where possible. Staff morale is high. Governors understand their statutory duties and are keen to help the school improve.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are dedicated to ensuring pupils are safe and well cared for. Staff understand their responsibilities in keeping children safe and know how to report concerns. Leaders follow up concerns quickly and effectively. They keep detailed records of their actions. They make appropriate referrals to external agencies, such as local authority children's services. They also work proactively with the police to support vulnerable pupils who are at risk of becoming involved in criminal behaviour.

A range of interventions are in place to support pupils who are struggling with their mental health. Leaders have begun to assess the impact of these interventions to make sure pupils get effective support.

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

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

- The quality of education is inconsistent. Where teaching is weak, pupils do not learn well. Leaders should provide staff with further training and support so that curriculum implementation is consistently strong within and across subjects.
- The support leaders provide for pupils in the early stages of learning to read is not targeted enough to meet pupils' individual needs. Some pupils do not catch up quickly enough. Leaders should develop the reading strategy, particularly for early readers, to make sure pupils read well.
- Staff do not have consistently high expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour. Where expectations are low, pupils do not learn well. Leaders should make sure that staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour. This consistency of expectation from staff should reinforce standards to pupils so that the number of suspensions continues to fall.
- Too many pupils do not come to school regularly. These pupils miss out on important learning. Leaders should continue to work with pupils and families to raise awareness of the importance of good attendance and behaviour so that more pupils attend school every day.

## 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>	143963
<b>Local authority</b>	Sheffield
<b>Inspection number</b>	10259566
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,095
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Kay Smith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gina Newton
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.birleysecondaryacademy.co.uk">www.birleysecondaryacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	14 and 15 January 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school makes use of eight alternative providers. Seven of these are unregistered.
- The number of pupils with SEND is well above the national average.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation. This ensures pupils learn about the full range of post-16 opportunities available to them.
- The number of pupils entered for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is below the national average. These subjects have been shown to provide pupils with a strong base for a wide range of further study. Leaders are working to improve the curriculum offer to increase the number of pupils entered for the EBacc.

## Information about this inspection

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

- 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.
- The lead inspector held several meetings with the headteacher during the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with three governors, a trustee and a representative of the chief executive officer.
- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: mathematics, history, travel and tourism, art and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Where possible, inspectors also spoke to groups of subject teachers.
- An inspector listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils, formally and informally, about their learning and experiences at school.
- Safeguarding documentation and records for behaviour and attendance were checked.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour throughout the school day, including during lesson visits and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils about their views on behaviour and the wider experiences they receive at school.
- Inspectors reviewed the parental responses received through the Ofsted online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the responses received through Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Zoe Helman, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Janet Sheriff	Ofsted Inspector
Kate Rowley	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Whieldon	Ofsted Inspector

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