

# Inspection of Birtenshaw School Merseyside

82 Higher Lane, Liverpool, Merseyside L9 7AB

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Inspection dates: 4 to 6 July 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
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Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
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Personal development	<b>Good</b>
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Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	<b>Yes</b>
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## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy coming to Birtenshaw School Merseyside. Staff go to great lengths to ensure that they know each pupil individually. Adults strive to meet each pupil's specific special educational needs. Pupils benefit from consistent routines and strong, caring relationships with adults. This helps them to feel safe.

Teachers and staff expect the very best for each pupil. Teachers and other adults make effective use of the school facilities and specialist resources to help to remove any barriers that pupils have to their learning and development. Pupils are expertly supported to develop their levels of independence and communication skills. They achieve well in a range of subjects.

Leaders and other adults expect pupils to behave well. The atmosphere around the school, and in lessons, is calm and purposeful. Staff routinely support pupils' complex sensory needs, for example by providing morning swimming sessions and outdoor walks, and the use of tactile resources. These activities help pupils to regulate their own behaviour and they prepare pupils well for more formal learning.

Leaders place a strong emphasis on pupils' personal and social development. Pupils enjoy trips and visits to the local community. These trips are carefully designed to help pupils to develop their social skills and an awareness of any risks to their welfare and safety. Leaders provide regular sport, yoga and relaxation sessions. These opportunities support pupils' physical and mental health extremely well.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They have carefully designed specialist curriculum pathways that cater for pupils' specific learning needs, as well as their individual stages of development. Pupils' various starting points and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are suitably assessed so that pupils follow an appropriate learning pathway.

Some pupils access the curriculum at a pre-formal stage of learning. In this pathway, leaders have meticulously planned the knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember. This helps teachers and staff to identify the small steps of learning for each individual pupil. This enables pupils to make progress through the curriculum and achieve well.

As pupils progress to a semi-formal curriculum, leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced and suitable for pupils. In this pathway, pupils study an increasing range of appropriate subjects. Teachers are adept at assessing pupils' learning. They successfully adapt the delivery of the curriculum to meet the wide range of pupils' needs and abilities. This helps pupils to build consistently well on what they already know and can do.

A small number of pupils have started to follow a formal pathway of learning. In some subjects on this pathway, the knowledge that leaders want pupils to learn is not as clearly identified as it could be. In these subjects, leaders have not fully thought about the order in which new knowledge should be taught. This hinders some pupils' learning.

Teachers and staff have strong subject knowledge and expertise related to pupils' SEND. They use this to develop pupils' numeracy, communication, and speech and language skills to great effect. Adults skilfully teach pupils how to communicate using a wide range of resources, for example sign language. This helps all pupils to engage more fully with their learning and to make choices for themselves.

Reading is prioritised throughout the school. Songs and rhymes are used to indicate transition times for pupils, for example when it is time to tidy up or when it is snack time. There are also daily opportunities for pupils to read or be read to. Leaders have introduced and embedded a systematic synthetic phonics programme, which begins as soon as pupils are ready to learn to read. All staff are trained to deliver this phonics programme with confidence. This helps pupils to become increasingly confident and fluent readers.

Pupils told inspectors that behaviour in their school had improved in the recent past due to the systems that leaders have introduced. Pupils are well supported to recognise the feelings that may lead to negative behaviours. This helps them to regulate their own emotions and conduct. When pupils struggle to behave appropriately, staff use clear and consistent strategies to provide help and support. All staff model and reinforce respectful behaviours.

Pupils are encouraged to gain as much independence as possible so that they are well prepared for their next steps in education. They learn cooking skills and practice interactions for social situations in a safe and supported way. Pupils learn how to cross roads safely and how to buy goods from the shops. Pupils also visit places of work and explore different job roles, for example as part of a visit to a local factory. However, a few older pupils have limited opportunities to learn about different career and vocational qualifications in preparation for their next steps in life. Leaders' plans to widen this range of opportunities are still in the early stages of development.

Leaders ensure that older pupils are taught about relationships and sex education in an age-appropriate way which is suitable to their stage of learning and development.

The proprietor body has created roles and responsibilities that enable members to provide effective challenge and support to school leaders. The proprietor body, including the chair of the education board and the director of education, ensure that the independent school standards ('the standards') are met securely and consistently. The proprietor body meets all of its statutory obligations. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Staff are proud to work at the school. The majority of staff feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and that they proactively promote staff well-being.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff receive regular safeguarding training. This includes specialist training so that staff feel confident identifying any risks to pupils who are potentially more vulnerable due to their complex developmental and communication needs.

Strong processes are in place so that staff regularly identify, record and share information about pupils that could indicate a risk of harm. Leaders work effectively with a range of external services to provide specialist support for pupils and their families.

Pupils are explicitly taught how to stay safe through the curriculum and programmes to support their wider development. For example, teachers work with parents and carers to set weekly targets. This is so that, together, they help pupils to reduce self-harmful behaviours. As pupils become more developmentally aware, they learn about online safety.

Leaders publish the safeguarding policy on the website. The safeguarding policy reflects the current statutory guidance. It is also made available to parents in a hard copy, on request.

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

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- In some subjects in the formal pathway, leaders have not fully defined the knowledge that pupils must learn and in what order. This hinders how well some pupils progress through the curriculum in these subjects in this pathway. Leaders should clarify the knowledge that pupils must learn. This is so that pupils achieve highly across all subjects in this pathway.
- The programme of careers advice and guidance that leaders have designed is not as varied and well thought out as it could be for a few pupils. This hinders the exposure that some pupils have to work related and vocational opportunities. Leaders should strengthen these opportunities so that all pupils are as well prepared as they could be for life beyond school.

## 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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	145182
<b>DfE registration number</b>	341/6011
<b>Local authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	10267684
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	76
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	None
<b>Proprietor</b>	Birtenshaw Group
<b>Chair</b>	Donna Marie Thompson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Amy Standish
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£76,573 to £96,546
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 317 8277
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.birtenshaw.org.uk">www.birtenshaw.org.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:merseyside.school@birtenshaw.org.uk">merseyside.school@birtenshaw.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 to 7 May 2021

## Information about this school

- The school is located at 82 Higher Lane, Liverpool, Merseyside L9 7AB.
- All of the pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. The school provides for pupils who have significant physical impairment, complex health needs, learning disabilities and/or autism.
- There were no students in the sixth form. There were no children in the early years.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in May 2021.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the second routine inspection that took place 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 carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the chief executive of the Birtenshaw Group and the chair of the education board.
- Inspectors spoke with some pupils about school life. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation. This included information relating to the standards, the school's curriculum, leaders' improvement priorities, leaders' approach to safeguarding pupils and the checks that leaders carry out on newly appointed staff. Inspectors also spoke to staff to check how well they understand safeguarding procedures.
- An inspector carried out a tour of the premises.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted staff survey and spoke to a range of staff to discuss the support that they receive from leaders.

- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text comments.

### **Inspection team**

Amanda Downing, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Phill Walmsley

Ofsted Inspector

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