

# Inspection of Birkenhead Park School

Park Road South, Birkenhead, Merseyside CH43 4UY

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Inspection dates: 14 and 15 November 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The head of school is Peter Mee. This school is part of the Bepart Educational Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Mike Kilbride, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Cook. The CEO is also the executive headteacher and is responsible for this school and a sixth-form college.

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

Pupils are growing ever more proud to attend Birkenhead Park School. There has been a turnaround in culture brought about by the new behaviour policy. Pupils have responded positively to the school's higher expectations. They behave well and are developing strong learning habits.

The school has strong ambitions for the academic achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It recognises that, for too long, pupils have not achieved well. The school has made positive changes to, for example, the curriculum. However, it is too soon to see the full impact that these have had on the quality of education that pupils receive.

Most pupils are happy and enjoy being in school. The school is tenacious in its approach to improving pupils' attendance. However, there are still pupils who are regularly absent from school. This hampers their achievement.

The school offers plenty of clubs for pupils to develop their interests. For example, pupils partake eagerly in clubs such as rugby, sewing and Spanish. There are opportunities for pupils to engage with visitors, such as local politicians. Pupils learn about tolerance and acceptance. They show respect for each other regardless of background or belief. Pupils who are new to the country are supported successfully to integrate well into school.

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

Previously, the trustees and governors were slow to take action to halt the decline in outcomes for pupils at this school. They did not hold the school sufficiently well to account. However, since the trust's decisive action last year to change the leadership structure, the school is on a rapid journey of improvement.

The school has designed a broad curriculum that meets the needs of its pupils, including those with SEND. The knowledge that pupils should learn has been carefully set out. The school supports teachers well to develop their subject knowledge. There is now a more consistent approach to delivering the curriculum. However, at times, some teachers do not choose the most appropriate activities to help pupils retain learning over time. This means that pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding. Typically, they identify and remedy misconceptions. Nevertheless, in a small number of subjects, teachers do not always identify the gaps in learning that pupils have. As a result, some pupils struggle to develop a secure understanding across the curriculum. This is particularly true in key stage 4, where, due to historic weaknesses in the curriculum, pupils do not have a secure foundation on which to build new concepts.

Recently, the school has improved its processes for identifying the additional needs of pupils. It provides useful information for staff about these pupils' needs. Teachers use the information provided to successfully adapt the curriculum to support these pupils. Nevertheless, inconsistencies in the delivery of the curriculum have an impact on the abilities of pupils with SEND, preventing them from achieving well.

The school has precisely identified the classroom behaviour that it expects from pupils in accordance with 'the BPS way'. This has greatly improved the climate for learning. Pupils are respectful, follow the rules diligently and apply themselves in class. The school deals appropriately with a very small minority of pupils who choose not to comply with these high expectations. Pupils and staff alike commented on how much pupils' behaviour has improved.

Raising attendance is the school's top priority. The school, supported by the trust, takes a measured and strategic approach to improving attendance rates. Consequently, there have been some improvements in pupils' attendance. However, attendance rates still fall below the national average.

A culture of reading for pleasure is firmly embedded. Reading is carefully intertwined through the curriculum, as well as strategies to support pupils' reading. The school accurately identifies any deficits in reading that pupils may have. In key stage 3, effective support is put in place for these pupils to help them to make progress in reading. This enables them to access learning across the curriculum with more ease.

The school gives clear guidance to teachers on how to approach sensitive topics in the personal, social and health education curriculum. Pupils fully understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships. The school ensures that pupils have sufficient information to make choices about their next steps when they leave this school. Pupils are beginning to take on roles of responsibility, such as being a subject ambassador, although these roles are in their infancy.

Staff see the momentum of change in the school and support it. The school considers staff's workload, especially around the feedback given to pupils. Staff feel valued.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- There are some inconsistencies in teachers' pedagogical choices. Consequently, some pupils do not build knowledge as they should. The school should ensure that teachers have the necessary knowledge and expertise to make the most appropriate pedagogical choices to deliver the curriculum well.

- In a small number of subjects, teachers do not implement the school's assessment methods effectively to identify and then remedy gaps in pupils' learning. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge that prevent them from being able to make links in their learning. The school should ensure that teachers use assessment methods effectively to identify and address gaps in knowledge.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly, despite the school's strong strategies to improve attendance rates. As a result, these pupils have gaps in their learning. The school should continue to work closely with pupils and their families to rapidly improve pupils' attendance rates and to reduce persistent absenteeism.

## 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136411
<b>Local authority</b>	Wirral
<b>Inspection number</b>	10290166
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	757
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Mike Kilbride
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Mee
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.birkenheadparkschool.com">www.birkenheadparkschool.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 July 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership of this school. The CEO has taken on the role of executive headteacher. The head of school took up post in October 2022. There have also been changes to the local governing body.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school makes use of one unregistered and five registered providers of alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, head of school, other leaders and members of staff, trustees and members of the local governing body, including the chair. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, science, languages, history, English and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils from Years 7 to 11 about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation document, school improvement plans, minutes of trustee and local governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Jenny Jones, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Gil Bourgade	Ofsted Inspector
Phil Lloyd	Ofsted Inspector
Jamie Jardine	Ofsted Inspector

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