

# Inspection of Birchills Church of England Community Academy

Farrington Street, Walsall, West Midlands WS2 8NF

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Inspection dates: 16 and 17 April 2024

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The executive principal of this school is James Dean. This school is part of St Chad's Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sarah Cockshott, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anthony Orlik.

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

Warm relationships between staff and pupils are at the centre of this caring school. Strong links between the local community and school help promote the sense of tolerance and respect for all.

The school recognises that outcomes have been historically low. However, the curriculum is being successfully redesigned so that all pupils gain the necessary knowledge to build upon their prior learning. There are high expectations for all, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The school is a calm and orderly place to learn and play. Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. Pupils are safe and know and understand the different forms of bullying. When this occurs, they know who to report issues to and are confident that trusted adults will help to resolve it.

Pupils are enthusiastic about the roles they can take on in school. This includes playground leaders, worship leaders and classroom managers. They value the opportunities available to them, including clubs such as football, archery and cricket and say that teachers respond to their requests to run extra clubs and activities they enjoy.

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

The school has set about reshaping the curriculum and training staff to enable all pupils to meet their high ambitions. In subjects such as science, history, computing and writing, where the curriculum is more established, learning is broken down into appropriately sized steps and logically sequenced to enable pupils to deepen their learning. In these subjects, staff have received training which has strengthened their subject knowledge. This enables staff to present information clearly and means they can check when there are any misconceptions.

While published outcomes are currently low, pupils from an early age can articulately recall their learning across a range of subjects. Work in books demonstrates pupils' understanding and reflects their teachers' high expectations. The school is still developing a small number of subjects. Training, to support staff to deliver these subjects, is recent and it not yet improving what pupils know and can do.

The school is aware that assessment procedures are not consistently embedded in all subjects. In subjects where this is not in place, staff do not routinely check pupils' understanding within lessons. Where assessment processes are well established, there is accurate identification of the gaps in pupils' learning and an understanding of what is needed to address this.

The school has improved the way in which it identifies the needs of pupils with SEND, starting as soon as children enter the school. Appropriate support is then

given. To meet the needs of pupils with more complex needs, the school works effectively alongside external agencies and parents. Pupils with SEND are able to access the same curriculum as their peers, due to the adaptations made to learning. When required, support may be offered through accessing bespoke provision.

Children learn to read as soon as they begin attending the school. Staff receive training so that they can deliver a highly structured reading curriculum. Pupils learn the sounds they need to know and read books that are well matched to their ability. Some less confident readers are still developing their reading fluency but enjoy hearing their teachers read a range of stories from inspiring authors.

A well-planned curriculum and purposeful learning opportunities provide the youngest children with a strong start. Well-trained staff support children in the key areas of learning within early reading, writing and mathematics. Routines are quickly established. Children form positive relationships.

Pupils are eager to share their learning with adults and demonstrate respect and politeness. They are engaged in their learning and become animated when sharing what they know and understand with visitors.

While attendance is low, the school takes swift action to address this and works effectively with individual families to remove barriers to regular attendance. This work is having a positive impact on improving attendance.

Pupils know how to stay safe, including online. They are aware of the importance of a balanced diet and their mental health. Pupils respect each other and learn about the different faiths of pupils in school. The school provides a range of experiences beyond the classroom. After school clubs, visiting international sports people and professionals from a wide range of jobs to inspire pupils to believe they too can be successful in the world of work.

Parents are positive about the school. They appreciate the high-quality pastoral support for their children and families. Leaders are ambitious for the pupils and community they serve. Members of the trust and local academy committee carry out their duties effectively. Staff morale is high, they appreciate the support they receive professionally and personally from leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- The curriculum is still being developed and is not yet fully embedded in a few subjects. This means that pupils do not build their knowledge as effectively as

they do in other subjects. The school should focus on embedding its agreed curriculum in these subjects so that pupils can learn equally well across all subjects.

- In a small number of subjects, changes to learning sequences are not being delivered consistently well by all staff. Where this is the case, pupils do not develop a deep enough understanding of the intended learning. The school should ensure that all staff are sufficiently well trained to support all pupils to know and remember more in all subjects.
- The use of assessment is not implemented securely in a minority of subjects. This means that teachers are unsure of any gaps in pupils' understanding. The school should ensure that agreed assessment procedures are in place to support the identification of what pupils understand to inform what they need to learn next.

## 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>	139435
<b>Local authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	10294590
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	453
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Anthony Orlik
<b>Executive Principal</b>	James Dean
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.birchills.walsall.sch.uk">www.birchills.walsall.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	13 and 14 December 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school makes use of one alternative provider.

## 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.
- The inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive principal, acting head of school, as well as the leaders responsible for the early years, safeguarding, SEND, behaviour, early career teachers, attendance and personal development.

- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer, chief operations officer, a trustee and the trust's senior improvement partner. As well as members of the local academy committee.
- The lead inspector also spoke to the Christian distinctiveness director and the school improvement advisor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and physical education. They also visited a number of English lessons across the school. In addition, they spoke to pupils and looked at pupils' work within computing, English, geography and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record, risk assessments and a sample of case files for pupils receiving support from external agencies. An inspector also spoke to a representative from the alternative provision. Inspectors 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 examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, records of governance and documentation relating to attendance and pupils' behaviour.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. However, inspectors took account of the free-text service, and spoke with parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors also considered responses to the staff survey.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with groups of pupils both formally and during less structured parts of the day.

## Inspection team

Donna O'Toole, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Yates	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Ray	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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