

Short inspection of Birkenhead Sixth Form College

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 April 2024

Outcome

Birkenhead Sixth Form College continues to be an outstanding provider.

Information about this provider

Birkenhead Sixth Form College is located on the Wirral, Merseyside. In 2017, it became part of the BePART Educational Trust and converted to an academy. The Trust includes the college and a local high school. The college was last inspected in December 2016.

The college offers a wide range of A-level and vocational courses with a small number of GCSE courses that form a foundation-year option. Almost all students who attend the college are aged 16 to 18. The most popular subjects that students study are in arts, business, English, law, psychology and science. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,355 students on level 3 programmes and 73 students on level 2 programmes. The college receives high-needs funding for 50 students.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

All staff have very high aspirations of what students can achieve irrespective of their starting points or background. Consequently, students develop their resilience, confidence and self-belief through their studies. Most students progress to university courses or higher and degree apprenticeships when they leave the college.

Students enjoy their learning. They say that their teachers make learning interesting and lively and that they are given the freedom to be creative. Students develop a passion for the subjects that they study. They feel respected and thrive in the calm and inclusive learning environments that staff create. Students' attendance is high.

Students benefit from a breadth of activities and opportunities that extend their knowledge and skills beyond their qualifications. Through a very comprehensive tutorial programme and 'Friday Events', they learn about mental health and well-being, managing finances, national observations such as Black History Month, and healthy relationships and consent. Students say that they enjoy the extensive choice of clubs and societies available to them. Students feel safe and valued as adults.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have redesigned their curriculum recently to ensure that it remains highly ambitious for all their students. Subject specialists lead and plan logical and well-structured individual curriculums that develop students' knowledge, skills and behaviours substantially over time. For example, in A-level history, teachers know which topics students find the most challenging. They break learning down into manageable units to develop students' knowledge of key terms, such as 'proletariat', 'bourgeoisie' and 'feudalism', before exploring Marxist stage theory.

Teachers have significant experience and are experts in their subjects. They use a variety of highly effective teaching strategies to help students to retain knowledge over time. Teachers skilfully help students to understand how concepts and ideas are related. For example, in A-level sociology, students use their knowledge about crime and gender roles and apply this to the chivalry hypothesis and the links to double deviance. Teachers ask probing and challenging questions to assess students' understanding and to check for gaps and misconceptions in their knowledge.

Students benefit from high-quality learning materials that support their learning. They feel that these resources help them to fully grasp the concepts that they need to learn. In A-level history and A-level sociology, teachers use topic handbooks that students use constructively to add their own notes to extend their learning. These handbooks help the few students who miss learning to catch up on their work.

Leaders set high expectations for the assessment of students' work. Teachers annotate students' assessments in detail and identify deficits in their knowledge. Teachers adapt their teaching where necessary. Students act swiftly on the feedback they receive, such as using a revision notebook to re-write paragraphs when they make factual errors. Teachers' formal assessments are highly effective in preparing students for their examinations. A high proportion of students achieve the highest grades.

Teachers support students exceptionally well to ensure that they do not fall behind. They run revision sessions during holidays and weekends to provide students with the best chances of success in their examinations. Teachers provide highly effective support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Students are fully involved in discussing and agreeing their support plans.

Students feel very well supported by staff to make informed choices about their next steps. They benefit from highly effective independent careers education, information, advice and guidance. Students receive a wide range of additional information to support them with their career aspirations. They can book appointments with staff at the 'careers clinic' to discuss the wide range of options available to them. Students who have done this say it was extremely helpful to them when making their university choices.

Leaders have very robust arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of education. They monitor students' progress in detail and intervene swiftly to provide support for students and teachers when necessary. Leaders are dedicated to ensuring that teachers maintain the highest standards in their teaching practices. They have a keen focus on continuous improvement.

Governors have an excellent oversight of the quality of education and student progress and performance. They have developed an open and honest relationship with senior leaders that creates a culture of excellence, trust and support. This permeates throughout the college.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Provider details

Unique reference number	144829
Address	Park Road West Claughton Wirral Merseyside CH43 8SQ
Contact number	0151 652 5575
Website	www.bsfc.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Mike Kilbride
Provider type	16-19 academy
Date of previous inspection	7 to 9 December 2016
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since Birkenhead Sixth Form College was judged to be outstanding in December 2016.

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Suzanne Wainwright, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Anita Pyrkotsch-Jones	His Majesty's Inspector
Kim Bleasdale	His Majesty's Inspector
Zoe Ibbotson	His Majesty's Inspector

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