

Inspection of Birchen Coppice Academy

Woodbury Road, Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY11 7JJ

Inspection dates:	19 and 20 November 2024
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Inadequate

The headteacher of this school is Sandra Pennington. This school is part of Victoria 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, Sharron Philpot, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gurinder Singh Josan.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is a welcoming oasis that is firmly at the heart of the community. There is a strong sense of belonging amongst staff and pupils. The high-quality pastoral care for pupils and their families is a key feature of the school's work.

Pupils grow to contribute positively to the warm and inclusive environment. They are succeeding in many parts of school life. However, the school does need to improve pupils' achievement in writing and their understanding in some subjects. The school understands what needs to be done next to help pupils do better.

Pupils behave well. They have a secure understanding of what it means to be part of the community in school. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning, and strong relationships with adults, reflect the great improvements made in the last two years. Pupils feel safe and know that if they need help, adults are swift to offer support.

The school develops pupils' character well. Pupils are helped to understand what it means to grow up in the wider society. They have opportunities to exercise leadership roles and contribute to the life of the school. Pupils help to setup assemblies and lunchtime sports, for example. They understand that is important to help to make everyone's life better.

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

Children enter the early years often well behind their peers nationally. The school acts rapidly to help them settle in and understand how to work well with each other. High-quality interactions with adults mean children develop their speech and language effectively. The strong provision for reading begins with clarity and consistency from the first week they arrive.

The school makes sure that teaching pupils to read is central to the curriculum. Staff have the expertise they need to teach phonics well. Pupils read books that match the sounds they know. Teachers check that pupils are on track with their reading. If pupils fall behind, they receive support to help them catch up. Pupils enjoy reading. They understand why reading is important and do so every day.

Pupils' writing is not as strong as it could be. The school has rightly recognised this. Leaders have recently changed the approach to writing. There is now a rigorous programme to support teachers and help pupils improve their writing skills.

A great deal of work has been done to identify what the school wants pupils to learn overall. However, there is variability in how well staff deliver this. Sometimes teaching does not seize the opportunities to help pupils to deepen their understanding. The school, with the help of the trust, has ongoing support in place to develop this.

Learning is adapted well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff know how to meet pupils' individual needs. For example, they use modified tasks, additional resources and skilful adult support to help these pupils with learning in

the classroom. Further provision put in place by leaders supports pupils well. For example, pupils with speech, language and communication needs are helped to engage with the ambitious curriculum while achieving important developmental goals.

Some subject curriculum areas are better developed than others. For example, curriculum thinking in geography is well planned to achieve ambitious end points. Pupils achieve well and enjoy in these subjects. However, in some other subjects this work is earlier in its development. This means that some pupils do not have secure knowledge and understanding of some key concepts.

Attendance is improving strongly. The school does all it can to get pupils in and it remains a top priority. Pupils understand that is important to be in school. They appreciate the rewards they receive for attending well, working together and achieving in their work. Arrangements for managing behaviour are especially effective. However, the school is not complacent and is continually looking at what is working well and what can be improved.

The provision for pupils' personal development is carefully constructed and thoughtfully planned. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of relationships and health education. They talk fondly of the residential opportunities they have. Staff use assemblies thoughtfully to increase pupils' understanding of the wider world.

Leaders at all levels are deeply committed to the success of pupils. Trustees have poured in additional resources to support the school. They are clear that it is about getting things right for the pupils and the community around the school. Leaders have taken strong actions to make sustainable changes in recent years. They hold a very accurate view of the school. Parents and carers reflect the much-improved provision and inspectors agree.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not develop pupils' writing skills well enough over time. The curriculum has recently been revised to address this but is not fully embedded. The school should ensure that staff receive the support and guidance needed to ensure that the approach to writing is implemented well so that it meets the needs of all pupils.
- The school is still developing staff expertise to deliver aspects of the curriculum successfully. The inconsistencies in staff's expertise hinders how well some pupils acquire and develop a deep understanding of subjects over time. As the school implements its refined curriculum, it should ensure that teachers are supported to develop their subject specific skills and expertise to enable them to deliver the curriculum effectively.

- The recent curriculum changes in some foundation subjects are in their early stages of implementation. Due to variability in how effectively the curriculum in different subjects has been developed, some pupils cannot recall what they have learned in these subjects. The school should ensure that the curriculum in foundation subjects is fully developed and effectively delivered so that pupils are able to know and remember the key knowledge.

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

Unique reference number	144650
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10294632
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	175
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gurinder Singh Josan
CEO of the trust	Sharron Philpot
Headteacher	Sandra Pennington
Website	www.birchencoppiceacademy.org.uk/worcs/primary/birchencoppice
Date of previous inspection	9 May 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Victoria Academies Trust.
- The school uses two alternative provisions for pupils. One is registered and the other is unregistered.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with trust leaders, the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors held discussions with members of the board of trustees, including the chair of the trust and the local governing board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, English, geography and science. For each of these subjects, inspectors met with subject leaders, carried out visits to lessons, spoke to pupils and looked at some of their work.
- Inspectors also visited the early years provision at various points during the inspection.
- Inspectors visited some school community activities and reviewed the extra-curricular activities with leaders.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to parents and pupils at various points in the inspection.
- Inspectors met with leaders in relation to the school's approach to science and writing, including reviewing a range of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited the areas used to support pupils during the school day.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to behaviour, bullying, attendance and safeguarding.
- 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.

Inspection team

Richard Wakefield, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
John Parr	Ofsted Inspector
Razia Ali	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024