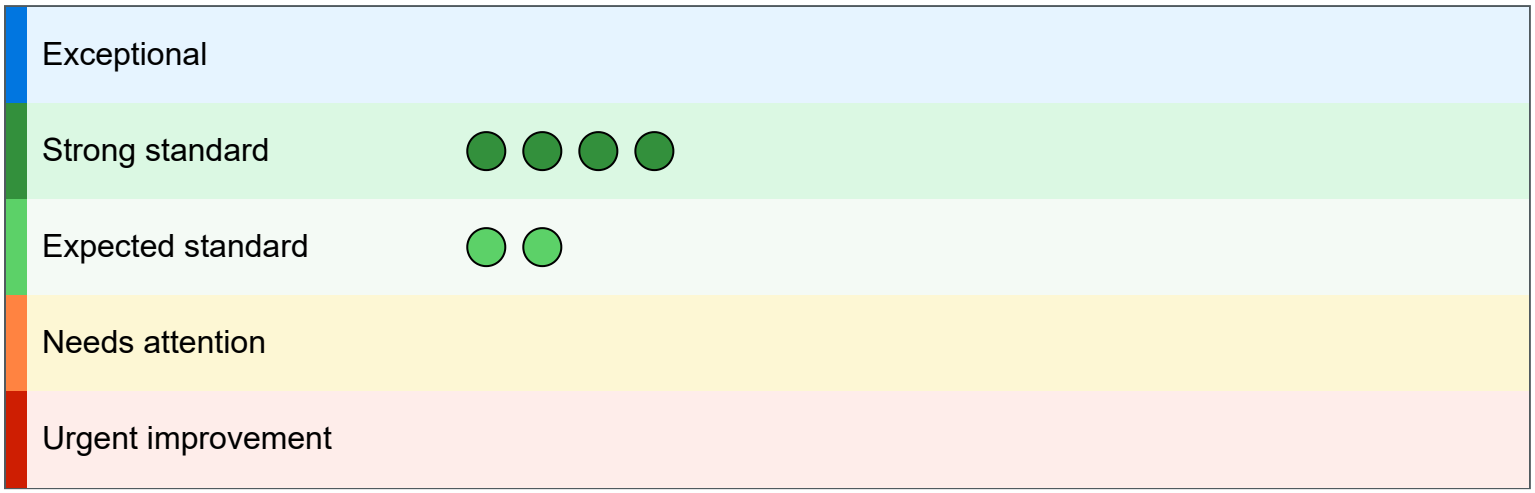
Birkdale High School

Address: Windy Harbour Road, Birkdale, Southport, Merseyside, PR8 3DT

Unique reference number (URN): 137297

Inspection report: 14 April 2026



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard

Leaders have implemented a robust and highly ambitious curriculum across all subjects and year groups. They regularly review curriculum plans with staff and make astute changes when needed. For example, they have recently introduced more vocational courses in order to meet the diverse needs of pupils in key stage 4.

Teachers know their subjects very well. They are instrumental in the improvements that have been made to the quality of teaching. Teachers value the bespoke support they receive to develop their practice. Leaders use the information they have about the quality of teaching to implement a highly effective professional training programme for staff. Consequently, the curriculum is taught consistently well.

In lessons, teachers rigorously check what pupils know. They use this information to provide support for pupils to understand challenging concepts. Teachers skilfully adapt their teaching. They provide timely support for pupils who find learning hard. This ensures that pupils can access the ambitious curriculum. Pupils understand that teachers have high expectations of them. They are keen to learn. Pupils enjoy opportunities to show staff what they know.

Inclusion

Strong standard

The vision of Birkdale High School as ‘A School Where We All Belong’ is lived out in the daily lives of pupils, staff and leaders. Inclusion is truly at the heart of leaders’ decisions. Staff consistently go above and beyond for pupils. They are skilled in identifying any potential barriers to learning. The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is fully personalised and responsive to their changing needs. As a result, these pupils thrive in lessons, during social times and in their chosen activities.

Leaders have embedded highly effective systems to support disadvantaged pupils and those known to, or previously known to, social care. Staff work closely with multiple external agencies to enhance this support. These innovative strategies mean that pupils who may otherwise face barriers to learning, activities or trips are fully included in school life.

Leaders leave no stone unturned in their identification of potential barriers to learning. For example, young carers and pupils who speak English as an additional language receive excellent support. This enables them to access the curriculum successfully.

A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. Leaders work closely with these pupils and their families to ensure that these placements are appropriate for them. Staff regularly monitor the experience of these pupils. If pupils' needs change, leaders respond promptly to help them to succeed.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Leaders are relentless in their work to improve the lives of the pupils at Birkdale High. Every decision they make is made in the best interests of the pupils. In recent years, the focus on improving pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching has had a demonstrable impact. As a result, pupils now consistently benefit from highly effective teaching in calm and purposeful lessons.

Leaders work forensically to understand the impact of their strategies to improve. They swiftly take effective action when these do not lead to the desired results. Leaders ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are provided with the support they need to succeed.

Staff value the leadership of Birkdale. They appreciate the sharp strategic vision of all leaders. They enjoy coming to work. Leaders prioritise the wellbeing and workload of everyone in school. They are particularly supportive of staff development. Leaders provide a plethora of opportunities for all staff to develop their practice. Consequently, they carry out their roles with skill and enthusiasm.

Leaders work very well with parents and the wider community. Families acknowledge the bespoke support provided for their children. Most parents would recommend the school.

Trustees and governors fully meet their statutory duties. They work closely with school leaders and staff to ensure that improvements are sustained. Trustees and governors have a deep understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They offer effective challenge and continually check the impact of leaders' efforts.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

Leaders have established a well-crafted personal development and wellbeing programme. This fully prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. This programme is highly personalised, and goes beyond statutory requirements. It ensures that pupils become responsible members of society and active citizens. The programme is adapted regularly and allows pupils to build on their understanding over time. Leaders ensure that this programme is fully responsive to current issues. For instance, pupils learn about positive masculinity. Pupils develop a detailed understanding of topics such as consent and healthy relationships. This is demonstrated in the consistently positive and nurturing relationships between pupils.

Pupils value the abundance of opportunities they have in school. Staff ensure that pupils have a variety of clubs, societies and leadership opportunities. There is dedicated time for this daily during period X. This offer includes innovative clubs for pupils to explore their interests. For example, many pupils attend the animal club and the darts club, and help out in the school's wellbeing garden. Leaders diligently track the participation of pupils and make changes to suit the needs of all pupils. For vulnerable pupils, this offer is enhanced. Staff ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils are prioritised. Consequently, the vast majority of pupils regularly take advantage of the school's offer. The school's ASPIRE award is a highlight of the school's ambition. Pupils strive to achieve this award, and many do.

Staff are appropriately trained to meet the needs of pupils, including those with barriers to learning. Leaders have established robust pastoral systems that support pupils with their wellbeing.

Leaders have embedded a highly effective careers programme across both key stages. From Year 8, all pupils benefit from individualised advice and guidance on their career options. Pupils have regular experiences with employers and education settings. Staff carefully match the needs of pupils to the experiences they have. As a result, pupils go on to appropriate further education, employment or training opportunities. Many of these options are bespoke, including enhanced college and employer placements.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Pupils achieve increasingly well across the curriculum. In particular, pupils achieve very well in English, mathematics and science in national examinations at key stage 4. In many cases, pupils now achieve above national averages. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils remains in line with national averages for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have recently strengthened the support available for these pupils, but this has not yet had the intended impact on pupils' attainment.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit from the bespoke support they receive. This means they achieve well from their starting points.

The relentless work to improve pupils' reading, writing and numeracy is effective. This allows pupils to make progress well. Because pupils gain the important knowledge and qualifications they need, most pupils move on to suitable further education, employment or training opportunities when they leave school.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders have created a warm and welcoming school. Most pupils want to attend Birkdale. Attendance is in line with national averages. Leaders have clear systems to support pupils who may face barriers to regular attendance. In many cases, this is effective. A minority of pupils are persistently or severely absent from school. Leaders have clear plans to continue to improve the attendance of all pupils. This includes ensuring that all staff play a part in improving attendance. However, the impact of some of this work is not yet consistently evident.

Leaders have established an environment that is highly conducive to learning. Staff clearly communicate how they expect pupils to behave. As a result, pupils benefit from a calm environment where they can focus on their work, free of interruption. Pupils value this. They consistently show respect towards their peers and adults. Pupils describe school as a place where they can be themselves. Bullying and discrimination are not tolerated. Pupils know that any incidents will be dealt with quickly and effectively.

Leaders have established highly effective systems to support any pupils who may find it hard to meet their high expectations. Leaders ensure that these pupils receive timely help to improve their behaviour.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Birkdale High School is ‘A School Where We All Belong’. Staff and pupils truly feel part of a cohesive team. They share the goal of all pupils achieving their personal best. Pupils are very well cared for by staff. Pupils fully trust staff to deal with any concerns they may have.

Most pupils achieve well, particularly in English, mathematics and science. In national examinations at the end of key stage 4, many pupils achieve above national averages. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Disadvantaged pupils achieve in line with disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Improvements made to the curriculum ensure that pupils receive consistently high-quality teaching. Pupils enjoy learning. Teachers carefully check what pupils know. This means they routinely support pupils to close any gaps in their learning they may have. Pupils who experience barriers to learning are very well supported to access the curriculum.

Pupils are very respectful towards their peers and staff. Pupils follow the high expectations that leaders set. This means that they enjoy calm lessons and social times. Most pupils attend school regularly. This means that they benefit fully from the highly positive school environment. Bullying is not tolerated here. Pupils value the consistently positive relationships they share with staff and their peers.

There is a wide range of opportunities available to pupils. These activities allow them to develop interests and talents. Most pupils take advantage of this offer. The careers guidance and information that pupils receive supports them to make informed decisions about their futures. Pupils value diversity. They have a deep understanding of and accept different cultures and faiths.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that staff take collective responsibility for securing consistently high levels of pupil attendance, with a particular focus on reducing persistent and severe absence.
- Leaders should ensure that their analysis of data continues to drive high-quality support and sustained improvements in outcomes for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, so that they can exceed national averages in national examinations.

About this inspection

This school is part of Southport Learning 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), Ian Raikes, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Stuart Bellerby.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with headteacher, the CEO, the chair of the trust, and 2 members of the local governing committee, including the chair, during the inspection.

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 inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of 7 alternative provisions, including 2 that are unregistered.

Headteacher: Gareth Banks

Lead inspector:
Helen Fowler, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
David Roberts, Ofsted Inspector
Paula Crawley, Ofsted Inspector
Sue Farrimond, Ofsted Inspector
Lynsey Gobin, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 14 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

923
Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

940
Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

21.78%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.38%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

16.79%
Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	57.4%	45.4%	Above
2023/24 (final)	53.6%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	59.9%	45.3%	Above

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	51.9	46.0	Above
2023/24 (final)	50.7	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	49.9	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.22	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.14	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	27.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	37.5%	25.8%	Above
2022/23 (final)	41.2%	25.2%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	35.2	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	42.0	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	32.2	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.27	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-1.11	-0.57	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	27.0%	53.1%	-26.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	37.5%	53.1%	-15.6 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	41.2%	52.4%	-11.3 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	35.2	50.4	-15.2
2023/24 (final)	42.0	50.0	-8.1
2022/23 (final)	32.2	50.3	-18.1

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.27	0.16	-0.43
2022/23 (final)	-1.11	0.17	-1.28

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	90%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	99%	93%	Above
2021 leavers (revised)	97%	94%	Average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	7.2%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	8.0%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.0%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	19.3%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	22.9%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	24.4%	26.5%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional 🔵

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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