

Birtenshaw Hall (Children's Charitable Trust)

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105280
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	336467
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2009
Reporting inspector	David Smith

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	8
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Eddie Hart
Headteacher	Mr Paul Carolan
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2006
School address	Darwen Road Bromley Cross Bolton BL7 9AB
Telephone number	01204 306043
Fax number	01204 597995
Email address	enquiries@birtenshawhall.bolton.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited five lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and parents. He observed the school's work and looked at lesson planning and students' progress data. The inspector also considered four questionnaires from parents, one from a student and 14 from staff.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding, including links with other agencies
- the effectiveness of the collection, evaluation and use of data in providing challenge in students' learning and the promotion of satisfactory progress
- the match between the students' learning needs and their curriculum
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in developing a capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Birtenshaw Hall School is a day school maintained by Birtenshaw Hall (Children's Charitable Trust) for students who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder, physical disabilities often combined with complex health needs. Many of the students have challenging behaviours. The students on roll are aged 11 to 19. All of the students have a statement of special educational needs. A very large majority of the students are of White British background and boys outnumber girls by two to one. Most of the students are looked after by a local authority and most are resident in Birtenshaw's children's homes. The school has recently achieved the Eco-Schools Silver Award. Plans to build a new school are at an advanced stage.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Birtenshaw is a satisfactory school which meets the students' personal needs well. Through rigorous self-review the recently appointed senior leaders have accurately identified the school's strengths and areas for development and are driving forward school improvement. Middle leaders share the vision and ambition to move the school from satisfactory to good. The governing body makes a satisfactory contribution to school improvement. Governors are involved in evaluating the school and provide good levels of support. However, their level of challenge to senior leaders is satisfactory, rather than good. This demonstrates that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Students enjoy their learning and make every effort to attend school. When the extent of their learning difficulties and other barriers to learning are taken into account, their achievement is satisfactory. There have been recent improvements in the collection of performance data, but the school is not yet in the position to judge students' progress as they move through the school. Variations in students' progress are understandably linked to their special educational needs and/or disabilities, rather than whether, for example, they are a boy or a girl. The students with autistic spectrum disorder make good progress in their ability to share some of their learning and social time with their peers. Students make good progress in the more practical aspects of their learning, such as sequencing numbers. They make satisfactory progress in their communication skills by using a wide range of strategies, such as the use of symbols. This allows them to access other aspects of their learning.

The curriculum is satisfactory and carefully planned in small steps to meet the students' individual needs. Links with local schools are developing and offer exciting opportunities for the students to engage in activities with their mainstream peers. However, there is some slippage in the use of the available time for teaching which contributes to satisfactory rather than good progress. Care, guidance and support are good and the arrangements for safeguarding students are satisfactory. There is good staff training provided to meet the students' medical needs. However, teachers have insufficient access to training to help them keep up to date with educational practice.

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. The introduction of accredited courses and the promotion of independence skills are positive aspects of the provision. However, some of the sixth form students have too few opportunities to spend time with students of the same age.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

- Ensure that the data collected about students' work is used to better effect to measure how well they are doing over a number of years.
- Ensure that members of the governing body provide a good level of challenge to senior leaders by being more fully involved in evaluating the school.
- Ensure that all of the time available for teaching is used fully.
- Increase the staff's teaching knowledge and skills by increased access to appropriate training.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Students make satisfactory progress in their work from their various starting points. The tracking of students' progress has improved recently, but the school is not in the position to judge each student's progress over a period of time. Individual targets have an adequate level of challenge and they achieve most of them. Photographs of students' participation in their activities provide valuable evidence of their progress. These show, for example, that the higher attaining students make good progress in selecting the correct ingredients for a range of recipes. Variation in students' progress is linked to their complex needs and the school adapts its strategies and planning to engage the students in their learning. In lessons for students with profound and multiple difficulties the staff use an individual approach with each student to ensure that they engage in their learning. Students with autistic spectrum disorders make satisfactory progress in their class work and good progress in their personal development and independence. Students respond well to the opportunity to experience practical activities which encourage good progress, for example, in their work with numbers. They enjoy the opportunities provided to explore the sounds made by a range of percussion instruments and make good progress in indicating their preferred instrument. However, less progress is made in reading and writing. Consequently, there is a strong focus on promoting communication skills, which ensures that students can access other aspects of the curriculum. This also helps students to make satisfactory progress in preparing them for the next stage of their education or training.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students are engaged, for example, in helping to raise money for charities. Students with challenging behaviour make good progress in their ability to spend their time in shared activities with other students. For example, their efforts to save electricity are celebrated in school assemblies and helped the school to get the Eco-Schools Silver Award. Students have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of physical activities. The use of the school's swimming pool and trampoline are particularly popular and help the students to make good progress in adopting healthy lifestyles. Students feel safe in the school, develop positive relationships and attend well. A parent commented that her son had a poor attendance record at a previous school but enjoys attending Birtenshaw.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The collection, evaluation and use of performance data are satisfactory. There are some limitations in the available resources and this contributes to the satisfactory rather than good teaching and learning. Enthusiastic teaching, combined with intensive and skilled support enables students to make good progress in their independence skills. The teaching assistants provide an appropriate balance of care and challenge, which helps to provide students with the confidence to participate in activities. For example, students are encouraged to make choices and decisions and to communicate their preferences. The students receive an appropriate curriculum that is planned carefully to meet their wide range of complex needs. The local area is used well and students enjoy visiting the garden centre which helps them to take part in enterprise activities. Also, the school's grounds are used effectively to enrich the curriculum. At times, the pace of learning

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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drops and there is too little emphasis on students' educational needs, leading to a loss of curriculum time.

The staff team includes a wide range of professionals who all contribute to the good care, guidance and support. Therapists provide essential support in a wide range of situations and help to promote the students' good personal development. For example, a student involved in a trampoline session with the occupational therapist thoroughly enjoyed his activity and made very good progress in his social and communication skills. The induction of new staff is very thorough with an emphasis, for example, on the high regard for health and safety in all activities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The recently appointed leadership team has introduced a clear agenda for school development. The strategic plan is ambitious and focuses on the essential areas for development. The staff team is aware of what the school is trying to achieve but some are not sufficiently involved in the school's self-evaluation process. Staff training has an effective focus on, for example, health and safety and the provision for students with autistic spectrum disorder. However, the staff team is provided with too few opportunities to attend training to extend their curricular knowledge and teaching skills. The governing body has clear roles and responsibilities, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Governors provide good support and a satisfactory level of challenge to senior leaders. Their work helps to ensure that the school provides satisfactory value for money. The arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory and meet statutory requirements. The school is strengthening links in the local area as it builds on the satisfactory promotion of community cohesion. The school's promotion of equality of opportunity and its effectiveness in tackling discrimination are evident in all aspects of its work. The school's informative newsletter is further developing the good links with parents and improving communication. In addition, each student, with staff support, sends home a weekly report.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Teaching ensures that activities are planned to match individual learning needs. This includes accredited courses that have been introduced since the last inspection. These provide an appropriate level of challenge for the students and, as a result, they make satisfactory progress. They enjoy the opportunity to take part in their activities linked to horticulture and the school has developed good facilities in the school grounds to extend this aspect of the curriculum. Good teamwork, combined with a sensitive and consistent approach by staff, promotes strong and trusting relationships with the students. This allows, for example, valuable opportunities for students with very challenging behaviour to mix with their peers. Good care, guidance and support enable the students to enjoy their experiences in the local community. A parent stated that he would appreciate more opportunities for his son to mix with students of the same age in the school. The school is aware of this and, for example, a social area is provided for the sixth form members, which helps them to make good progress in the development of their independence and life skills. Links with local schools are providing increased opportunities for the students to spend time in mainstream schools. For example, they enjoyed their recent visit to an art exhibition in a local school.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires are clear that their child enjoys attending the school and this is reflected in the students' good attendance. They are happy with their child's experiences at the school and are confident that the school meets their child's particular needs. The following comments are typical of the strong parent and carer satisfaction with the school: 'Since starting at Birtenshaw my son has grown in confidence and developed skills in all areas of his life' and 'they have given him the skills to self-manage his behaviour'. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns regarding communication between the school and home but have noted recent improvements in the information provided by the school. The inspector agrees with the parents' comments.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Birtenshaw Hall (Children's Charitable Trust) to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 4 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 13 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	4	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	2	50	2	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	4	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	75	0	0	1	25	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	3	75	1	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	4	100	0	0	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Birtenshaw Hall (Children's Charitable Trust), Bolton, BL7 9AB

Thank you for making me so welcome. I enjoyed my visit and the opportunity to see how well you are doing. I am writing this letter to tell you what I found.

Birtenshaw is a satisfactory school and the sixth form is also satisfactory. You all seem to enjoy school and your attendance is good. You are cared for well and satisfactory arrangements are made to keep you safe. The members of staff are effective at helping you to improve your behaviour. I enjoyed watching you having a good time taking part in a wide range of physical activities in the hall. It was clear in your assembly that you had enjoyed a busy week at school and earned your certificates. You have helped the school to get the Eco-Schools Silver Award – well done! You should be proud of the displays of your work in the classes and around the school.

The headteacher and staff work hard to help you. I think it is important that you make as much progress as possible and I have asked teachers to ensure that the information collected about your work is used more effectively to measure how well you are doing. The staff team needs to make sure that all of the time available for teaching is used fully. Staff should also attend more training so that they can become even better at helping you to learn and make progress. I have also asked the governors to get to know the school better in order to help improve it further.

I hope that you will continue to try your best and wish you good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely,

David Smith

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