

Inspection of Birkenhead Park School

Park Road South, Birkenhead, Merseyside CH43 4UY

Inspection dates: 12–13 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

In the past, pupils at this school have not achieved well in their GCSE examinations. Since the last inspection, leaders have improved the quality of education that pupils receive. Staff have higher expectations of pupils. However, pupils do not benefit from an overall good quality of education. This is because there are still weaknesses in how well the curriculum is planned and delivered in some subjects.

Pupils feel safe at school. They told us that adults in school will listen to them if they have any worries or concerns. They say that staff will take care of them. Many pupils join this school part-way through their secondary education. These pupils receive a warm welcome and lots of help from staff. Most of these pupils settle in well.

Pupils say that behaviour is good. Corridors around the school are mostly calm. Pupils told us that any incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with by staff. During lessons, most pupils listen attentively. Older pupils told us that classrooms are 'quiet places' where pupils can learn. Staff encourage pupils to attend a range of lunchtime and after-school activities, such as chess club and rugby.

Pupils said that bullying is rare. They told us that the school is a friendly place to be and it is 'okay to be different'. Pupils say that racist and homophobic language are 'not things that we hear' at school. They told us that if they report bullying that staff deal with it quickly and it stops. Pupils are confident that any victims of bullying receive high-quality support.

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders have acted to improve the quality of education for pupils at the Birkenhead Park School. Leaders' actions are having a positive effect on pupils' achievement in their GCSE examinations. Pupils achieve well in subjects such as modern foreign languages. Pupils' achievement is improving quickly in other subjects, for example mathematics. In these subjects, leaders ensure that teachers have a strong knowledge of the curriculum.

That said, there remain weaknesses in some curriculum areas at key stage 4. This is because some subject leaders have not focused enough on developing teachers' knowledge of the curriculum and how to best deliver important concepts over time. In these subjects, pupils do not achieve well.

Most subject leaders have redesigned their key stage 3 curriculums to match the ambition of the national curriculum. Leaders have designed curriculums to allow pupils to build on earlier learning. On the whole, teachers make clear to pupils what they need to know and be able to do.

Teachers ensure that pupils regularly revisit earlier learning. This helps pupils to remember the knowledge that is the most important. For example, in mathematics, teachers check that younger pupils have a secure understanding of place value.

Despite this, some older pupils have gaps in their knowledge. More recently, leaders have designed curriculums carefully to ensure that more teachers use assessment effectively to identify these gaps. Some teachers use assessment well to check whether pupils have understood important concepts. That said, there are times when teachers do not use assessment to adapt teaching and fully address some pupils' misconceptions.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) study a wide range of subjects. This group of pupils also benefit from excellent pastoral support. However, the information that leaders provide for teachers about pupils with SEND is not high enough in its quality. Teachers do not have the information that they need to adapt the curriculum well for these pupils.

There are clear systems to manage pupils' behaviour. Most pupils, staff and parents share the view that pupils' behaviour is good. Improvements in this area mean that, during lessons, teachers can focus on teaching the curriculum. Those pupils who struggle to manage their own behaviour receive high-quality support to improve their conduct.

Staff work with families to ensure that pupils understand the importance of attending school every day. Many pupils who join the school part-way through their secondary education have not attended school regularly in the past. Many of these pupils are supported well to improve both their attendance and behaviour.

Leaders have created a tolerant and accepting community. Many pupils are keen to give their time and raise money for local charities. Pupils can access a wide range of support to help them to look after their physical and mental health. Pupils also appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs on offer. Pupils benefit from a well-planned careers programme. This helps to prepare them for the next stage of their education.

Staff say they are proud to work at the school. Since the previous inspection, leaders have stabilised staffing and reduced the number of temporary staff. Staff told us that leaders are considerate of both their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a robust system to ensure that adults who work at the school are safe to work with pupils. Staff are aware of potential safeguarding issues relevant to the local area. They receive regular safeguarding training and they know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils learn about the dangers of gang-related violence and knife crime. They also learn about how to stay safe online and the negative effects of drug and alcohol misuse.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject leaders have not focused enough on developing teachers' knowledge of how to teach subject-specific content over time. As a result, pupils have underachieved. Subject leaders must ensure that teachers develop a better knowledge of their subject and how to best teach this content over time, so that they are able to better deliver subject curriculums.
- Leaders have not ensured that teachers receive high-quality information about pupils with SEND. Consequently, teachers are unable to adapt the curriculum well enough for these pupils. Leaders must ensure that teachers have enough information about this group of pupils to adapt the curriculum well for pupils with SEND.
- In the past, leaders have not ensured that some teachers use assessment well to address pupils' misconceptions fully. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders must ensure that teachers use assessment to inform teaching and identify and address fully pupils' misconceptions.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	136411
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10110907
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	668
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Helen Aspinall
Headteacher	Helen Johnson
Website	www.birkenheadparkschool.com/
Date of previous inspection	10–11 May 2017

Information about this school

- This school is part of the BePART Educational Trust.
- The school uses alternative provision at Wirral WRAP and Utopia to contribute to the education of a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

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

- During the inspection, we spoke with pupils about their work and other aspects of school life. We had meetings with subject leaders, senior leaders, teachers and other members of school staff.
- The inspection focused deeply on mathematics, history, English and languages. We met with subject leaders, visited lessons, met with teaching staff and pupils, and looked at pupils' work. Other subjects were also considered as part of this inspection, including geography, drama, physical education and science.
- As the lead inspector, I spoke with a school improvement partner and a representative from the local authority. I also spoke with the chief executive

officer of the BePART Educational Trust and three members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.

- We reviewed school documentation. This included subject curriculum plans. We also checked on documentation relating to governance and considered information about pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- We checked on the school's systems for recruiting and vetting staff, and other documentation relating to safeguarding. We spoke to a representative from each of the alternative providers used by the school.
- We considered the views expressed by parents in the 48 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 21 comments received via Ofsted's free-text facility. We considered the 99 responses to a questionnaire for pupils and the 68 responses to a questionnaire for staff.

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