

# Inspection of The Birley Academy

Birley Lane, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S12 3BP

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Inspection dates:	13 and 14 May 2025
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Victoria Hall. This school is part of L.E.A.D. Academy 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), Diana Owen, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andy Buck.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The Birley Academy has improved since its previous inspection. This view is shared by pupils, staff, parents and carers.

Leaders have heightened their expectations for pupils' behaviour and achievement. Most pupils are living up to these expectations. As one older pupil noted, 'Behaviour is completely different now. You can actually learn in lessons.' Bullying has significantly reduced, and pupils are confident to report it and that it will be dealt with.

Pupils are learning effectively in most subjects. Published outcomes, based on pupils' achievement in national examinations taken at the end of key stage 4 are improving year on year.

Where there is still work to do to meet the higher expectations, such as pupils' learning of some aspects of the personal development curriculum, leaders are aware. Work is already in progress, but improvements have not yet become fully embedded.

Pupils are safe and well cared for. The majority of pupils would now recommend the school, as would an increasing proportion of parents and carers. Pupils are proud to say they are part of The Birley Academy community.

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

Pupils study a curriculum that is well designed to build their knowledge and understanding over time. The school has supported staff to ensure that the delivery of the curriculum is more consistent than was the case previously. Teachers benefit from a programme of professional development that is deepening their understanding of the curriculums they are teaching. This is supporting them to make increasingly effective decisions in the classroom.

There remains some variability in how well the curriculum is implemented. In most cases, where curriculums have been in place longer, teaching is effectively adapted to ensure the needs of all pupils are met. In these subjects, staff make well-judged decisions about the most effective ways to help pupils learn.

The school has improved the way it identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils' plans are now much more precise about how to support individual need. The use of these plans in the classroom is inconsistent. Some parents have concerns about the support their children receive.

The school carefully identifies those pupils who need support with their reading. These pupils benefit from high-quality provision that precisely matches their needs. As a result, their reading improves quickly.

The school hosts a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. Pupils supported in this resource are well cared for pastorally and are successful in making progress towards their non-qualification learning goals to prepare them for adulthood.

The school has deliberately reset expectations around behaviour. Pupils and staff recognise there is now much greater clarity in expectations and much more certainty of how incidents will be followed up. Behaviour in lessons is calm and purposeful. Behaviour in corridors between lessons is more variable.

Pupils' overall attendance is below the national average. The school is taking appropriate steps to improve attendance, with some signs of improvement, especially for pupils with SEND. However, despite this, the school's work has remained largely unsuccessful in removing the barriers for some pupils to attend as regularly as they should.

The school aims to ensure that pupils are prepared personally for the next stages of their lives. Through a taught personal development programme, and a range of assemblies with external speakers, pupils develop a strong knowledge of the risks they face in life, how to keep themselves safe and where to turn for support. The programme is less effective in ensuring that pupils' knowledge of other aspects, including democracy and of different faiths and religions, is secure.

Pupils benefit from a strong careers programme, including work experience in Year 10. This programme supports them to make appropriate decisions about their next steps.

Leaders plan improvements to provision systematically to ensure they are long lasting, rather than merely 'papering over the cracks'. They work hard to gain the faith of the wider community. As a result, parents and carers are much more positive about the school. They recognise the improvements made. Staff feel equally positive.

Governors are highly knowledgeable about the school. They have strong systems for finding out accurate information about the school. They hold leaders to account for delivering high-quality education and make clear to the trust where support would be beneficial.

Leaders, including those from the trust, have managed the school effectively through some challenging times in terms of staffing. This collaborative approach has been a significant factor in the pace of progress of the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers do not make adaptations to their teaching based upon what pupils know and can do. This includes for some pupils with SEND. As a result, some pupils' learning is less secure. The school should ensure that teachers apply the school's agreed teaching strategies more flexibly and adapt their teaching based upon the knowledge and understanding that pupils demonstrate in their learning.
- The school's approaches to support pupils to attend more regularly have had varied impact. This means that some pupils continue to be absent from school too often. The school should ensure its work with families helps improve pupils' attendance consistently and effectively.
- The implementation of the school's PHSE programme does not ensure that all pupils develop a secure understanding of issues such as democracy and an understanding of different faiths and religions. This means that pupils are not fully prepared for the next stage of their lives. The school should ensure that pupils learn these crucial elements of the school's planned personal development curriculum.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	143963
<b>Local authority</b>	Sheffield
<b>Inspection number</b>	10379399
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,091
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Andy Buck
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Diana Owen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Victoria Hall
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.birleysecondaryacademy.co.uk">www.birleysecondaryacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16 July 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of L.E.A.D. Academy Trust.
- The headteacher joined the school in April 2024. The majority of the senior leadership team are new to the school since the time of the last inspection.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. It supports 20 pupils with autism.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND attending the school is above the national average.
- The school uses three alternative provisions. One of these providers is registered. Two are unregistered.
- 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.

## 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). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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.
- Inspectors reviewed information on the school website and considered a range of documents provided by the school, including minutes of governance meetings.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other leaders, including those responsible for the quality of education, behaviour, attendance, careers and personal development.
- An inspector held discussions with members of the local governing board and representatives from the trust, including the CEO. Inspectors were unable to hold discussions with any trustees.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in mathematics, English, history and art. Each deep dive included inspectors meeting the subject leader, visiting lessons, speaking to groups of pupils, reviewing pupils' work and speaking to teachers of the subject.
- Inspectors met with leaders in charge of reading and visited reading sessions to support pupils at the early stages of reading.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. They considered written comments from parents, shared through the survey and otherwise.
- Inspectors met with a wide range of staff to consider their views and spoke to others informally. They also considered the views of staff given via the Ofsted staff survey.
- Inspectors evaluated the views of pupils from the Ofsted online survey and spoke to groups of pupils formally and informally throughout the inspection.

## Inspection team

Steve Wren, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Joe Barton

Ofsted Inspector

Harkireet Sohel

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