



Progress Monitoring Inspection Report

Birkdale School

October 2023

School's details

School	Birkdale School			
DfE number	373/6005			
Registered charity number	1018973			
Address	Birkdale School 4 Oakholme Road Sheffield S10 3DH			
Telephone number	0114 266 8408			
Email address	enquiries@birkdaleschool.org.uk			
Headteacher	Mr Peter Harris			
Chair of governors	Mr Paul Houghton			
Proprietor	Birkdale School			
Age range	4 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	750			
	Pre-Prep	82	Prep	135
	Seniors	357	Sixth Form	176
Date of inspection	17 October 2023			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Birkdale School is a co-educational independent day school founded in 1904 and located close to the centre of Sheffield. It is a charitable trust administered by a single governing body which also has oversight of the associated senior school. The school has four sections: the preparatory school, comprising the pre-prep for pupils aged 4 to 7 years and the prep for those aged 7 to 11 years; and the senior school, comprising a senior section for pupils aged 11 to 16 years and a sixth form. This inspection focused on the preparatory school only. The school has 97 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupil has an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language for 46 pupils. The school's previous inspection was a focused compliance and educational quality inspection in May 2023.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an unannounced progress monitoring inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the educational quality inspection on 10 to 12 May 2023. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Independent School Standards Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 1, paragraph 2A (relationships and sex education)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 9 (behaviour)	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and)	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information) proprietors	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Quality of education provided – relationships and sex education [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2A]

- 2.1 The school meets the standard.
- 2.2 The school has an effective plan for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE). The policy for RSE is available to parents on the school's website. In drawing up the policy and scheme of work, the school has consulted pupils, parents and staff taking their views into consideration. The programme is designed effectively so that topics are revisited in subsequent years in order to build up deeper understanding. The scheme of work includes all of the requirements of the DfE's statutory guidance for RSE.
- 2.3 The PSHE and RSE programme is taught as part of the regular timetable, during tutor time, assemblies and specific targeted events. It ensures that all pupils cover the expected range of topics to support their personal development, including stable, caring relationships, formal marriage commitments and the conventions of courtesy and manners. During discussions with inspectors, pupils confirmed that topics such as these had been taught.
- 2.4 Each unit of work has specific learning objectives and opportunities for assessment related to these objectives. The scheme of work takes into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils and does not undermine the fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. In order to support staff who teach PSHE, including RSE, pastoral leaders have provided a bank of teaching materials during in-service training. These draw appropriately on those provided by professional organisations whose work is devoted to the teaching of PSHE and RSE.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.5 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.6 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Safeguarding implementation

- 2.7 The school meets the standard.
- 2.8 Scrutiny of records, observation and discussions with pupils and staff indicate that appropriate safeguards are implemented effectively, including in the early years. Those responsible for safeguarding hold senior positions within the school. They are suitably knowledgeable and appropriately trained, including for multi-agency working. Safeguarding, pastoral and healthcare staff share key information regularly and effectively. They take into account each individual pupil's physical and psychological needs and wishes, including those who have SEND. This information is used to agree appropriate action including the drawing up and implementation of individual support plans. There is effective liaison with external agencies, including referral to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and the local authority designated officer (LADO) for safeguarding. Training for other staff and for governors is conducted regularly as required. It is effective and includes informal updates.
- 2.9 Staff are knowledgeable about changes in recent legislation, including the management of children's mental wellbeing, contextual safeguarding, child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment and sexual

violence. They understand the principles underpinning the staff code of conduct and the procedures for making a referral, including the importance of low-level reporting. They are confident about using whistleblowing procedures. Interviews with staff confirmed that training is thorough and safeguarding is managed effectively. Senior leaders take appropriate action if any perceived breach of the staff code of conduct occurs or an allegation is received with regard to an adult who works with children. They understand their responsibility to make referral to relevant statutory bodies once investigations by external agencies are completed.

- 2.10 The governor responsible for safeguarding meets regularly with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies. This maintains effective oversight of safeguarding policies and their implementation in the main school and in the early years. Reports are given regularly to the governing board by the safeguarding governor and the DSL. These highlight appropriate details of any safeguarding incidents which occur, including during trips and outside of school. This ensures that governors have an appropriate level of understanding, scrutiny and oversight. In addition to continuous monitoring, a suitable annual review of safeguarding is undertaken.
- 2.11 Pupils stated confidently that they know how to stay safe, including online. They confirmed that they can talk to staff if they are worried or concerned. Any concerns raised are monitored and acted upon by the DSL. Records confirm that when pupils raise a concern, they receive a timely response and action is taken where needed. Monitoring and filtering of technology are effective.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9]

- 2.12 The school meets the standard.
- 2.13 A suitable written behaviour policy is implemented effectively and clearly sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupils' misbehaviour. An appropriate record is maintained of positive and negative notifications as well as sanctions for serious misbehaviour. This provision reinforces a culture where sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are not tolerated. The school's electronic system enables staff to record all behavioural issues. Inspection scrutiny of these records shows there is a clear oversight of recorded incidents of poor behaviour. Information from the records informs pupil behaviour management plans, resulting in appropriate actions such as interventions. The records are monitored regularly by senior management to identify patterns. Pupils commented that they are fully aware of the school rules and sanctions system. Pupils said the new system introduced in September 2023 is simple to remember and follow. They perceive the system to be fairly administered. Inspection evidence supports this view. Staff confirmed that the new system has been easier to implement compared to the previous year. Pupils observed when moving around the school are polite, courteous and conduct themselves in a responsible manner. They commented that relationships with their classmates are almost always harmonious.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21]

- 2.14 The school meets the standards.
- 2.15 A suitable recruitment policy covers the required recruitment checks and procedures. This is implemented effectively. All staff, governors and persons engaged in regulated activity are checked and recorded appropriately on the single central register of appointments (SCR). Those responsible for carrying out the required recruitment checks and the maintenance of staff records ensure that checks and evidence are in place prior to commencing work in the school. Appropriate procedures are in place for managing contractors, including ensuring that they are accompanied at all times if not checked by the school.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]

- 2.16 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]

- 2.17 The school meets the standard.
- 2.18 Senior leaders and governors, including those with specific responsibilities for safeguarding and the early years, demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that all the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils.

3. Summary of evidence

- 3.1 The inspectors held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the chair of governors. They visited different areas of the school, observed lessons and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.