

# Birkdale High School

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

**Inspection dates** 6–7 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- This is a much improved school. Achievement is good with GCSE results above the national average.
- Boys are making good progress in mathematics, English and across a broad range of provision. Achievement gaps between different groups of boys are narrowing quickly.
- The quality of teaching and learning has rapidly improved since the last inspection and is now good. There is an increasing amount of outstanding teaching.
- Boys feel safe and their behaviour is good. They demonstrate an enthusiasm for and keen application to learning.
- The school is led by an inspirational headteacher who has transformed the culture to one of ambition and continued improvement. Boys and staff now have their sights, expectations and ambitions set high.
- Senior leaders and staff have embraced the new culture. Middle leaders make an effective contribution to driving forward improvements
- Governors offer strong and well informed challenge to senior leaders.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is a small proportion of teaching that requires improvement.
- Marking in a few classes does not support boys towards their next steps in learning.
- The sharing of outstanding teaching practice is not fully developed.
- New data analysis and student progress monitoring systems need to be further embedded across all provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 lessons. They also undertook learning walks, visited an assembly and tutorials as well as activities at break and lunchtimes.
- Three groups of students met with inspectors. Discussions were held with school staff, including senior leaders, heads of departments, teachers, and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors were unable to look at responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) because there were too few responses to activate the site. They did however, scrutinise the school's evidence of communication with parent as well as student and staff surveys.
- Inspectors read a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, improvement and development plans, monitoring reports, behaviour logs and records in relation to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Patrick Geraghty, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Selby

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jo Morgan

Her Majesty's Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.*

### Information about this school

- Birkdale High is of average size for a secondary school. The percentage of boys known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average, as is the percentage of boys from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of boys with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average and the percentage of boys with a statement of special educational needs is low.
- It is a specialist school for history, mathematics and computing. The school became an academy in August 2011.
- In the inspection of December 2011 the school was placed in special measures. A new executive headteacher was appointed in May 2012. Since the last inspection substantive changes have been made to the composition and responsibilities of the senior leadership team. A new Chair of Governors took up position in July 2013.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment across all provision by ensuring:
  - that all teachers develop a wider range of learning strategies that fully engage all boys and promote their independent learning skills
  - that the school's outstanding practice is shared across all provision so as to develop all teachers' skills and to raise standards of teaching, learning and assessment from good to outstanding
  - that all marking supports boys in their next steps in learning.
- Ensure that new data analysis and student progress monitoring systems are both further refined and fully embedded across all school provision.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good. Results in GCSE examinations have improved significantly and are now well above the national average. The combined results of five good grades at GCSE including English and mathematics are also well above the national average. Improvement in mathematics has been significant.
- Most recent academy progress data indicate that there will be further significant improvement at GCSE five A\* to C including English and mathematics this year. Boys are making at least good progress and this was confirmed during the inspection through the observations of lessons and scrutiny of current work. Some boys, particularly the more able, are making outstanding progress.
- Gaps in attainment between different groups of boys are narrowing rapidly. Boys who are eligible for the pupil premium make good progress. Their progress is monitored systematically and they have benefited from well planned intervention strategies. The attainment of boys known to be eligible for free school meals is improving. Those boys who are disabled or have special educational needs make good progress because of the good teaching they receive and well targeted and planned support.
- Middle-ability boys are making better progress. The most-able boys are being increasingly challenged to excel because they are stretched and given high quality extension work.
- The use of early entry for GCSE English and mathematics for a small number of boys is considered carefully by the school. Those boys who take early entry but do not achieve the highest grade are given the opportunity to continue to study and at a later date re-sit the paper.
- The school offers many opportunities for boys to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Standards in reading are good and a strong reading culture is now developed in Year 7 and 8.
- The school promotes a wide range of extra-curricular activities to support boys in their curriculum and in developing wider cultural and sporting interests.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has rapidly improved since the last inspection and is now good. There is some that is outstanding, much that is good and a small proportion that requires improvement. Teachers know their students well and plan lessons that enthuse and capture boys' attention and interest.
- Better teaching has resulted in a higher level of challenge for boys and they have responded with enthusiasm and application. In these better lessons boys were excited and inspired by learning. They demonstrated refined independent learning skills and worked collaboratively in pairs and groups. Boys relish activities that enhance their problem solving and deeper thinking skills.
- Some exhilarating teaching and learning was observed in geography, physical education, business, French and music. The commonality between these sessions was excellent lesson planning that enabled boys to explore and develop their own solutions and ideas leading to a fuller and deeper understanding of the topics.
- In a few lessons boys were not sufficiently challenged to develop independent learning skills. Opportunities to work collaboratively or reinforce learning were limited. In these lessons activities are not always appropriately designed to ensure that all boys benefit fully and are sufficiently challenged.
- There remain some inconsistencies in the quality of marking. In the few lessons where marking is less strong boys were not given pointers to the next steps to improvement nor was there evidence to show teacher follow-up and dialogue with the student to assess improvement. In the

best marking, boys' work showed how they had used marking tips to improve and develop their knowledge.

- There is a strong focus on literacy to improve reading and writing across the curriculum. Good development of subject specific vocabulary was evident in many lessons. The school's strong focus on oracy is reaping dividends in the greater and more challenging participation of boys in class. There is good deployment of teaching assistants to support individual learning needs.
- Better focused staff development programmes have supported improvements in the quality of teaching. However, opportunities are not fully taken to use some of the outstanding practice seen in the school to accelerate improvement further.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of boys is good. They demonstrate a strong desire to learn. They have embraced a school culture which encourages them to accept greater responsibilities. Boys' behaviour around the school is very good; they are polite and cooperative with each other and adults.
- Behaviour for learning in lessons is good or better. Boys are becoming more self-confident learners and this has brought a new and positive atmosphere to school life. Boys are proud of developing skills in managing their own learning and take an active interest in the learning of their peers.
- Boys do not see bullying as a significant issue. When it occurs they say it is quickly and effectively dealt with and any issues are resolved. Boys appreciate the effective rewards system, which acknowledges good behaviour.
- Boys feel safe. They have a good understanding of safety concerning their own health and well-being because these aspects are covered in the curriculum and pastoral system. Spiritual and cultural issues at both a personal and global level are increasingly well covered.
- Attendance is high and punctuality to lessons excellent. Exclusions are low. Boys expressed high confidence in the school, its provision and in the improved quality of teaching and learning they experience. Boys have a renewed ambition and progress rates to sixth form colleges are excellent.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The school is led by an outstanding headteacher; an educator who places the learning and development of his students at the centre of school activity. Boys and staff unreservedly acknowledge that he has introduced a renewed confidence and established a transformed culture based on ambition, respect and endeavour. Both boys and staff have their sights, expectations and ambitions set high.
- The headteacher has brought to the school a razor sharp operational vision coupled with an unremitting drive for improvement. His ability to listen and engage all staff, together with an acute focus on what is best for the boys, has decisively moved the school forward.
- Senior managers, many new in post, have responded well to the challenge. They play a key role in conveying high aspirations and expectations to staff and boys. Middle managers form an increasingly innovative and collaborative group and are strong promoters of improvement work at classroom level.
- Self-evaluation is thorough, accurate and a key driver of improvement. New systems for data analysis and for the tracking and monitoring of students' progress require further embedding. However, they are already having an impact in informing on the planning and quality of provision. Middle managers and classroom teachers expressed growing confidence in these new systems.
- Increasingly effective management of teaching and learning has impacted on the quality of the boys' experience and on improved examination results. Teachers identified as requiring

improvement have access to good professional development. Arrangements to manage and assess the performance of managers and teachers are effective, tough and seek to reward and celebrate good and better performance.

- The school offers an increasingly broad curriculum. A strong drive has improved literacy and numeracy at Key Stage 3. The school has also developed good provision in horticulture and on link courses with a local general college of further education for a small number of Year 10 and 11 boys. The curriculum continues to have a strong academic focus which reflects well the needs of the majority of boys. Physical education makes a strong contribution to the physical well-being of boys through both its excellent provision and many extra-curricular activities.
- Links and communication with parents are good and improving. There is a regular and informative newsletter from the headteacher. Specific 'get to know the department' evenings have been organised for parents. The school's website is both attractive and informative.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well across school provision. Data is used well to monitor the performance of different groups of boys and is now effectively used to reduce identified gaps in achievement.
- The school meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding boys including for those accessing off-site provision.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors place the quality of the boys' experience at the centre of their work. The appointment of several new governors has significantly strengthened the governing body. The headteacher works well with the governors in a constructive partnership that has impacted on strengthening the school's strong improvement agenda.
  - Governors offer tough and well informed challenge to senior leaders on performance and the quality of provision. They know the school and have established effective links with managers and departments. They have set very high expectations for the future. They are well informed on the use of the pupil premium, on how it is spent and the impact of that spending.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137297
<b>Local authority</b>	Sefton
<b>Inspection number</b>	427718

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy convertor
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	780
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Karl Cockwill
<b>Principal</b>	Phil Fitzpatrick
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 December 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01704 577253
<b>Fax number</b>	01704 570451
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:pfitzpatrick@birkdalehigh.co.uk">pfitzpatrick@birkdalehigh.co.uk</a>

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2013

