

Inspection of City of Birmingham School

10 Court Road, Birmingham B11 4LX

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Removing barriers to learning lies at the heart of City of Birmingham School. The individual needs of pupils are carefully considered here. This includes pupils' academic, pastoral and behavioural needs. As a result, outcomes for pupils continue to improve. This prepares them well as they move on to their next destinations.

Pupils join the school at different times throughout the year. Many have experienced disrupted educational experiences before arriving. Staff ensure that pupils settle in quickly and help them to re-engage with learning.

Staff are highly vigilant to the potential safeguarding risks to pupils outside of school. The curriculum teaches pupils to be alert to these risks. Staff work very closely and effectively with families, carers and external agencies. The school's expectation of quickly getting the 'right help, right time' is well embedded. Consequently, pupils are safe here.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Staff act as positive role models. Staff care about pupils' well-being and want them to be successful. Pupils are taught different ways to manage their own behaviours and emotions. As a result, pupils become more settled after joining the school. Bullying does sometimes happen. If it does, staff support pupils and reduce the likelihood of it happening again.

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

Many pupils join here following an exclusion from their previous school. Pupils remain for different lengths of time. Staff work closely with pupils, families and previous settings to establish how best to support their needs. The school understands the potential barriers to pupils' achievement. All staff are highly ambitious for what each pupil can achieve. Pupils achieve well during their time here.

Reading is rightly prioritised across the school. Many pupils arrive with a poor experience of reading. All pupils' reading knowledge is assessed as soon as they join. Pupils who need individual support in reading are helped by well-trained staff. In lessons, the teaching of phonics is mostly accurate. Pupils read regularly. Books match the ability of pupils well. This means that more pupils are reading fluently across all age groups.

Since the previous inspection, the school has focused on embedding its curriculum across subject areas. They have paid particular attention in establishing what pupils already know and remember. Staff continue to regularly assess pupils' gaps in knowledge. Teachers use this information to adapt their lessons accordingly. This means that most of the time, learning activities are well thought out to support pupils' knowledge and skills. The number of pupils accessing and achieving qualifications is also increasing over time. Overall, pupils are well prepared for their next steps. However, in a very small part of the curriculum, the school has not yet identified the essential knowledge they want pupils to learn and the sequence in which it should be taught. Where this is the case, pupils are not building their knowledge over time in a logical order.

The school has established systems to quickly identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A number of pupils arrive at the school with previously undiagnosed needs. Staff work closely with external agencies to identify and understand these. However, the school's approach to planning and reviewing support is often too broad and lacks sufficient accuracy or precision. This means that some pupils with SEND are not always receiving the tailored support they need.

All staff focus positively on understanding pupils' behaviours. Pastoral support for pupils is strong. In classrooms, pupils' behaviours are calm and orderly most of the time. Pupils' work is generally well presented. Although overall attendance is low, leaders and governors are continuing to secure noticeable improvements in this area.

Supporting pupils' personal development is central to the work of the school. Specialist services engage positively with pupils. They support the work of the school in raising pupils' aspirations and wider opportunities. For example, professional music producers help pupils to write and produce songs. Pupils have a broad range of experiences, such as residential visits, and trips to museums and theatre. The school has an appropriately planned offer in place for careers education, information, advice and guidance.

Governors know the school very well. They are effective in both supporting and robustly holding the school to account. Staff are highly supportive of the school. All staff firmly believe in their strong moral obligation to support pupils here. The school is held in high regard by other schools and by the local authority.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small part of the curriculum is not yet fully developed. The school has not identified the essential component knowledge it wants pupils to learn and in what order. This means that pupils are not building their knowledge over time in a logical order. The school should ensure that it clearly identifies the specific knowledge it wants pupils to learn and remember in all areas of the curriculum.
- The school does not always plan or review the support for some pupils with SEND accurately or precisely. As a result, the needs of some pupils with SEND are not always supported well enough. The school should ensure that staff develop the expertise to accurately and precisely plan and review the support in place for all pupils with SEND.

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

Unique reference number	103146
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10322690
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	418
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Barry Bowles
Headteacher	Steve Howell
Website	www.cityofbirminghamschool.com
Dates of previous inspection	14 September 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Most pupils at City of Birmingham School have been permanently excluded from mainstream and other schools.
- A small number of pupils are placed at City of Birmingham School because they are at risk of permanent exclusion from their own school.
- Pupils join and leave the school at different times throughout the year. This means that the number of pupils on roll fluctuates throughout the year.
- The school is multi-site, being made up of seven campuses spread across Birmingham. The school uses three registered alternative providers. A small number of pupils attend full time.
- 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 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) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). 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.
- During the inspection, some classrooms on the primary site were partially closed due to the impact of adverse weather conditions the previous week.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, the chair of governors, governors, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked with parents and carers. Inspectors also talked informally with transport assistants, drivers and staff.
- The lead inspector met with a local authority representative and a school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors met with leaders from alternative providers.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, English, mathematics, science, personal, social, health and economic education and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at a sample of individual education plans for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils, formally and informally, about their learning and experiences at school.
- Inspectors observed informal times to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments. Inspectors also looked at responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, school policies, curriculum documents and SEND records.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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