

Inspection of Birchensale Middle School

Bridley Moor Road, Redditch, Worcestershire B97 6HT

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 September 2025

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Inadequate

The headteacher of this school is Emma James. This school is part of Bordesley Multi-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), Adrian Ward, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Barry Prever.

When Birchensale Middle School was inspected in September 2023, it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the school was inspected on three occasions. At the last monitoring inspection, leaders were judged to have made progress to improve the school, but more work was necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to attend this transformed school. The school's clear expectations for pupils' conduct are fully understood. This means that pupils are considerate towards each other. They focus well in lessons and typically try their hardest, as they know this is what is expected of them. Pupils have confidence in staff to help them if they have concerns. As one pupil, typical of many, said: 'The school is very supportive and rewarding.'

The school has consistently high expectations for pupils' achievement. These are embedded from when pupils first start in the school. This means that pupils are well supported to achieve and to be ready to thrive in their education. Pupils are achieving increasingly well. However, current published outcomes for the school do not yet reflect the recent improvements.

The school has a number of pupil leadership positions. These include a student council, sports leaders and an eco-group. Pupils are proud of how they work with leaders to drive improvements. Pupils also speak highly of the trips and visits the school organises for them. These include visits to London, a theatre and to a local church as well as a residential trip. These enrich pupils' experiences and helps them to be well prepared for life in modern Britain. These experiences also help the school to live its values fully for its pupils: belong, motivate, succeed, resilient.

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

The design of the school's curriculum has been extensively reviewed and is fully embedded. When pupils arrive in Year 5, the school ensures that it rapidly addresses any historic gaps in their knowledge. This means pupils are well placed to learn the ambitious curriculum. The school has a consistent, agreed approach to teaching. It ensures that tasks are well matched to pupils' prior knowledge. Staff check pupils' understanding well and make sure that any gaps in their understanding or misconceptions are addressed. That said, some key stage 3 pupils find it harder to recall important knowledge which they learned some time ago. This means they struggle to complete more complex tasks. Pupils typically take pride in their work. However, there remain some pupils who do not extend their written responses well enough. They miss opportunities to link their learning and to develop more extended written responses.

The school has a coordinated and effective approach to reading. It quickly identifies which pupils need support to read fluently. It puts effective support in place to ensure that pupils read with the fluency necessary to learn the school's curriculum. The curriculum is enriched with a specific focus on reading and high-quality texts.

The trust has worked with the school to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified accurately. Staff have useful information about these pupils. They use this to adapt activities in line with these pupils' needs. As a result, pupils with SEND now achieve well.

The school is explicit about its high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils are taught what these mean. This helps Birchensale to be a harmonious community. The few pupils who find it harder to meet the school's expectations receive rapid and effective support. The school has a highly developed approach to managing attendance. The school has a deep understanding of the barriers to regular attendance for some pupils. Their actions have led to high overall attendance and pupils are very well supported to attend regularly.

The school has carefully considered a range of wider experiences for pupils. The school tracks which pupils take up the opportunities to ensure all benefit. Pupils speak about what they have learned to keep themselves healthy and to live in modern Britain. This includes experiences of other faiths and traditions. They have appropriate information about possible future careers or destinations.

Staff speak very highly of how they are supported in their professional development. They are proud of the improvements in the school. Leaders engage with them productively around workload. Governors and trustees have an accurate evaluation of the school. They have supported and challenged leaders effectively to sustain improvements. The trust has provided consistent and helpful support to the school. This has helped leaders at all levels to make significant improvements to the quality of provision at Birchensale Middle School.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A few older pupils struggle to recall their learning over time. This means they find it hard to complete tasks which require more extensive retrieval of previous learning. The school should continue to embed its approach to assessment to support even more pupils to identify longer-term gaps in their knowledge, and to support pupils to know and remember more over time.
- Some key stage 3 pupils do not have sufficient support to extend their writing. This means their written responses lack depth. The school needs to ensure that pupils are supported to include extend their written responses to learning activities.

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	146699
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10411291
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	535
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Barry Prever
CEO of the trust	Adrian Ward
Headteacher	Emma James
Website	www.birchensale.worcs.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	24 and 25 June 2025, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Bordesley Multi-Academy Trust in April 2019.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision.
- 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 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act. 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.

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

- 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.
- 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.
- As part of this inspection, the inspectors met with governors and the chair and trustees. An inspector also met with trust employees including the CEO and Deputy CEO. Inspectors met with senior leaders, subject leaders, and groups of staff. Inspectors also talked informally with pupils to gather general information about school life. The lead inspector also scrutinised records of external visits to the school.
- An inspector spoke with the unregistered alternative provision which the school uses.
- The inspectors completed Deep Dives in these subjects: English including reading, mathematics, history and physical education. For each subject, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited other lessons in different subjects and looked at pupils' work.
- The inspectors reviewed the school's extra-curricular activities, enrichment programme and their careers and personal development programmes with leaders and pupils.
- The inspectors reviewed the school's behaviour and attendance records with school leaders.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including plans to improve the school and governor and trustee minutes.
- The inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, at various points in the inspection. They took account of responses to Ofsted surveys for staff and pupils, Ofsted Parent View including the free text responses, and other communication from parents.

Inspection team

Andrew Madden, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Washbourne	His Majesty's Inspector
Emma Titchener	His Majesty's Inspector

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