

# Silver Birch

Shard End Community Centre, 170 Packington Avenue, Birmingham, West Midlands B34 7RD

## Inspection dates

11–13 June 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders have created a culture of respect and high expectation. Staff are aspirational for all pupils. As a result, the majority of pupils make good progress across the curriculum from their individual starting points.
- Pupils behave well. They have positive relationships with their peers and teachers. They are proud of their achievements.
- The personal development of pupils is good. Careers advice and guidance are informative and impartial. Pupils are well prepared for their next phases.
- Leaders make sure that pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop spiritually, morally socially and culturally. Pupils learn about their differences with others and show respect and tolerance.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff take quick, decisive action where there are concerns around a child. Pupils say that they feel safe at school.
- Leaders have made sure that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Teaching engages pupils well. The vast majority of teachers plan learning that is matched to pupils' individual needs. On rare occasions, less-effective questioning limits pupils' responses.
- The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is a strength of the school. Pupils learn about relationships and keeping safe. They say that school helps them to make friends and resolve differences.
- The curriculum is appropriate to the context of the school. Pupils can arrive at the school as late as Year 11. Leaders make sure that pupils study meaningful courses. All pupils who left during the last academic year achieved qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Attendance for the vast majority of pupils is good. A small number of pupils often arrive late to school. Although leaders have made some improvements, on occasion, this does delay a crisp start to learning.
- Governance of the school has improved since the previous inspection. The oversight of teaching and learning, however, is a weaker aspect.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

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

- Further develop governors' understanding of the quality of teaching so that they can provide rigorous challenge to improve the school further.
- Continue to strengthen teaching and learning by making sure that:
  - teachers' questioning consistently deepens pupils' knowledge
  - pupils develop a love of reading and frequently read for pleasure.
- Continue to work with parents, carers and stakeholders to promote good punctuality, so that pupils access lessons on time.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders and the proprietor have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher has created a culture based on respect and tolerance. This ethos is shared by all members of the school community.
- Leaders and governors are ambitious for all pupils. They set high expectations and want the best for pupils. Staff successfully re-engage pupils who have missed long periods of education. They help to recreate a love of learning. Pupils feel valued, they want to come to school and they want to succeed. They are proud of their school and of their personal achievements.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders have carefully chosen meaningful routes for pupils, given that pupils can arrive as late as Year 11. They make strong links with local colleges and employers to make sure that pupils are well prepared for their futures. Alongside core subjects, pupils learn about the world around them. They engage in creative projects, including music and art. They also learn about historical events, including the Second World War. Leaders and governors place high emphasis on pupils' readiness for their next phases. Pupils make good progress across the curriculum.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. The majority of pupils arrive at the school with limited social experiences. Leaders make sure that pupils have access to a wide range of educational trips and visits. Pupils recently attended a Remembrance Day service at the National Arboretum. Pupils learn about a range of different cultures and religions. Pupils also visit international food markets and enjoy sampling dishes from other countries. On a weekly basis, pupils cook and eat a meal with elderly residents from the local area. Leaders promote equality of opportunity and diversity well. Pupils say that the school has taught them to respect differences.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have formalised the process for managing teachers' performance. Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. They identify appropriate areas for staff development. They make regular checks on pupils' progress, through regular classroom observations. Leaders use this information to set appropriate targets for teaching staff. As a result, teaching is consistently strong across the curriculum.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. The vast majority of pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school makes appropriate adaptations to the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. Interventions are appropriate and timely. Pupils access learning in small groups and one-to-one sessions. They are well supported by additional adults. Pupils make good progress in all areas of their learning from their individual starting points.
- Parents hold the school in high regard. They receive regular, detailed reports and know exactly how well their children are doing. They say that leaders 'go over and above' to make pupils feel welcome and help them to learn. Parents who met with the inspector said that the school has made a real difference to their children. They say that the school also offers support to them. Parents would recommend the school to others.

## Governance

- Since the previous inspection, the work of governors has strengthened. The chair of the governing body has a background in social care and understands the school's context well. The board consists of industry professionals who make sure that pupils have access to work experience. The board meets regularly. Governors have an accurate view of most aspects of the school's work.
- The chair of the governing body is responsible for safeguarding. She makes frequent checks on the reporting of concerns to make sure that processes and procedures are followed correctly. The chair provides regular, relevant training for staff. Staff have a secure understanding of their roles when it comes to keeping children safe.
- While some aspects of governance are strong, the oversight of teaching and learning is not as sharp. This has not had a negative impact on the quality of teaching, but means that governors are not as informed as they could be about the school's work.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The safeguarding policy is written with regard to current guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The policy is available on the school's website. Paper copies are also made available.
- There are two designated safeguarding officers. They are appropriately trained and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. They know about the risks in their local community. They maintain clear records and take decisive actions where there are concerns around a pupil.
- Staff have all completed appropriate training in child protection. They know how to recognise the signs of abuse and neglect. They report concerns quickly. Staff know about child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and radicalisation. They know about their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty.
- Pupils are taught how to keep safe. They learn about the dangers of gangs and knife crime. Pupils know how to stay safe online. Pupils told the inspector that they can always talk to staff if they are worried about anything.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers know pupils well. They pay attention to their interests and hobbies. They use this to create personalised learning to engage pupils. The vast majority of teachers use prior information to plan learning to meet individual needs. They are quick to identify pupils who are at risk of falling behind and reshape tasks. As a result, pupils enjoy learning because it is personal to them.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Many pupils have not attended school for a considerable amount of time. Teachers create a safe learning environment where everyone is made to feel welcome. Pupils feel comfortable in their lessons. They want to come to school and do well.
- Pupils arrive as reluctant writers. In English, there are high expectations of extended writing. Teaching is well planned and engages pupils well. Pupils learn about current and

thought-provoking topics, including crime and punishment and the death penalty. Using these themes, they write for a variety of purposes and audiences. Pupils craft convincing arguments, formal letters and reports. Over time, their use of written language grows in depth and maturity. Pupils who met with the inspector said that they were proud of their English work, as they had been unable to write a story before joining the school.

- In mathematics, pupils learn how to calculate mode, median and mean. They apply the learning to the heights of their peers and teachers. They are able to link theoretical concepts to practical situations. Work in books increases in difficulty over time. Pupils develop problem-solving and reasoning skills. They confidently tackle challenging equations and calculate missing angles.
- In science, pupils' learning is underpinned by practical experiments. They make sensible predictions and evaluate their work well. Pupils enjoy these opportunities. Pupils who met with the inspector spoke confidently about volcanoes and lava lamp experiments. The work in pupils' books and the school's information show that all pupils are making good progress from their individual starting points.
- The majority of teachers provide feedback in line with the school's assessment policy. Pupils respond well to this. As a result, they make improvements in their learning.
- Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge. The majority of teachers use skilful questioning to deepen pupils' understanding. On rare occasions, when questioning is not as effective, pupils' responses are limited. This, for a few pupils, results in a lack of challenge.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's PSHE curriculum is strong. Pupils learn about mental health, relationships and bullying. Pupils are well supported and nurtured. They share their own experiences and are able to speak confidently about issues and concerns.
- Pupils occasionally arrive at the school with preconceived views, including negative stereotypes and prejudices. Teachers teach pupils about discrimination and celebrating diversity. Pupils learn to reflect on their views and show respect for differences in opinion and belief.
- The school employs former pupils as mentors. The mentors receive relevant training and use their personal experiences to support learners. As a result, current pupils benefit from personal, pastoral guidance that helps them to access education effectively.
- The school prepares pupils well for their next phases. Careers education is effective. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education or training. Pupils visit local colleges and careers fairs. Leaders make sure that pupils are able to access work-experience opportunities. Pupils have clear ideas on what they would like to do when they leave. Those who responded to Ofsted's survey said that school helps them to make informed decisions about their careers.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. All pupils arrive at the school having experienced disruption to their education. Many have experience of multiple-placement breakdowns. A high proportion of pupils demonstrated challenging behaviours. Some had been permanently excluded from their previous schools. Pupils had negative views of education and were disengaged. The school goes to great lengths to welcome pupils. Staff take a genuine interest in their pupils. Pupils build trusting relationships with staff. Pupils are able to talk openly about their difficulties. As a result, they are able to manage their emotions effectively, through consistent staff support. Pupils describe the school as 'the best school ever'.
- The behaviour policy is clear. It is understood by pupils and applied consistently by staff. There are high expectations around behaviour and conduct. Pupils who met with the inspector said there is 'zero tolerance' of negative behaviour. The number of reported incidents is low. Since the last inspection, leaders have focused on analysing incidents. They identify causes and triggers and liaise effectively with outside agencies to source additional support for pupils.
- Pupils say that school has helped them to make friends and helped them to resolve differences. They say that there is no bullying. They know about different types of bullying, including verbal, physical and online bullying, and how to report concerns. They are confident that leaders would resolve any incidents should they arise. As a result, pupils who met with the inspector said that they feel safe at school.
- The school is proactive in following up absence. Leaders are quick to recognise trends and patterns and take appropriate action. They engage well with parents. Consequently, attendance for pupils is good.
- A small number of pupils do not arrive punctually to school. This prevents a crisp start to lessons and means that they are not fully ready to access learning. Improving punctuality is an area of development for the school. However, some pupils still require further support in arriving at school on time.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils join the school with starting points significantly lower than most pupils of a similar age. All have experienced disruption to learning and many have become disengaged. Many have attended a number of previous schools. Pupils can arrive at the school as late as Year 11. Pupils make strong progress in a short amount of time.
- The school focuses on achievement in core subjects to make sure that pupils are prepared for their next phases of education. All pupils who left during the previous academic year achieved formal qualifications in English and mathematics. These pupils all transitioned successfully to college placements or apprenticeships.
- Pupils are proud of their achievements. Their work in books shows gains in learning over time. Pupils learn from mistakes and work hard to improve. Pupils are able to study GCSEs, functional skills and entry-level qualifications. Current pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science from their individual starting points.

- Pupils make good progress across all areas of the curriculum. They develop good speaking and listening skills. They speak fluently on a range of topics and engage in drama sessions. They apply these skills to real-life situations, such as preparing for interviews.
- Pupils are reluctant readers. Teachers encourage reading aloud in classes and some pupils engage. Pupils do not engage in reading for pleasure as readily. Leaders are aware of this and are taking appropriate action.

## School details

Unique reference number	138971
DfE registration number	330/6013
Inspection number	10093006

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	14 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	9
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Noel Thomas
Chair	Angela Solomon
Headteacher	Noel Thomas
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,800
Telephone number	01217 474430
Website	<a href="http://www.silverbirchschoo.com">www.silverbirchschoo.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:noel.thomas@silverbirchschoo.com">noel.thomas@silverbirchschoo.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	27–29 April 2016

## Information about this school

- Silver Birch School is a small, independent day school situated in Shard End, Birmingham. The school offers up to 24 places to pupils aged 14 to 16 who have social, emotional behavioural and mental health needs. The school also offers places to pupils who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and those with autism spectrum disorder.
- All of the current pupils have additional learning needs. The vast majority have an EHC plan.
- Pupils are referred to the school by local authorities, including Birmingham and Solihull. Pupils are also referred directly from schools.



- The school is housed within Shard End Well-Being Centre. Pupils have access to facilities within the centre, including a sports hall and dining area. Pupils also access a local park for outdoor games.
- Currently, the school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school was last inspected in May 2016, when it was judged to be good.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector met with the proprietor who is also the headteacher. Meetings were also held with the deputy headteacher and teaching staff. The inspector took account of the views of pupils. The inspector made telephone contact with the chair of the governing body. The inspector also considered responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff.
- The inspector observed a number of lessons across the curriculum, including English, mathematics, science and PSHE. The majority of lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher. Pupils' work across a range of subjects was also reviewed.
- A number of key policies were scrutinised, including safeguarding, curriculum, behaviour, complaints and admissions. The school's record of checks made on staff was also examined.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's survey for parents. The inspector met with a small number of parents. The inspector also took into account parental feedback obtained by the school.

## Inspection team

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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