

Birdwell Primary School

Address: Sheffield Road, Birdwell, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70 5XB

Unique reference number (URN): 149455

Inspection report: 20 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard

Achievement

Strong standard 

Pupils achieve very well at Birdwell Primary School. Outcomes in national tests are above the national average across all performance measures. Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium also achieve these high standards. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities reach the high expectations set out for them.

Across the wider subjects in school, pupils develop deep knowledge of the subjects they study. They read, write and speak with confidence. Younger pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of number. Older pupils remember what they study and apply their knowledge to solve more complex mathematical problems.

Pupils' workbooks are shining examples of high quality. Pupils demonstrate their learning clearly and present it with pride. Pupils are consistently well prepared for the next stage of education.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard 

Pupils attend school regularly. Leaders impressively strive to improve this further, even though rates of attendance are already high. Leaders' insightful analysis of attendance enables them to continue to make these improvements. No opportunities are missed to ensure that pupils and their families are given the most effective support. The actions taken by the school's pastoral team are precise and effective.

The culture and ethos of the school have created an environment in which pupils can flourish. All pupils demonstrate consistently positive attitudes to their learning and behaviour. Staff understand and implement the school's behaviour policy consistently. They praise the achievements of pupils and showcase pupils' positive behaviour. Regular analysis of any incidents where behaviour does not reach these standards means that effective actions are quickly implemented. As a result, further incidents do not occur.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard 

Leaders have developed a broad and well-considered curriculum offer for pupils, with the support of the wider trust. The curriculum has been very well sequenced. It identifies the important knowledge that leaders want pupils to learn. For example, the school regularly provides pupils with additional teaching about how to stay safe online in today's world, including aspects of artificial intelligence. Regular and rigorous assessments, which leaders review, ensure that pupils keep up with the curriculum. Any gaps in pupils' knowledge are swiftly addressed.

Sustained professional learning opportunities have ensured that teachers are confident to deliver the curriculum. Teachers give pupils plenty of opportunities to practise their learning and to revisit, and make connections with, previous learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are given appropriate adaptations. Pupils demonstrate high levels of independence as a result.

A focus on basic skills, such as transcription and spelling in the early years and key stage 1, ensures that pupils have secured these aspects of their learning before moving on to more complex tasks. The school also prioritises reading. Pupils develop secure knowledge of sounds. They are also given lots of opportunities to practise their fluency. Pupils speak with excitement about the books they have read in the classroom.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders ensure that there are no barriers to learning or achievement that pupils cannot overcome in this school. Leaders skilfully monitor every aspect of the provision that pupils receive. This means that regular and timely adaptations are made for pupils. Pupils, therefore, reach high standards of achievement.

A clear and graduated approach ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. Targets are well matched to pupils' starting points in learning. Regular reviews of pupils' achievement ensure that these targets continue to be relevant to each individual.

Staff know pupils well. They identify pupils' needs quickly and support them to close gaps in their learning. Adaptations to support pupils with additional barriers are well considered and specific to each individual pupil's needs. Regular and evidence-led training opportunities for all staff ensure that they are confident to provide pupils with well-judged support. Positive relationships with external agencies mean the school can provide well-matched additional support for pupils from other services when they need it.

Leaders' careful monitoring and adaptation of the pupil premium strategy have led to impressive outcomes for pupils who are disadvantaged. A consistent and relentless focus from leaders to ensure that all pupils at the school achieve well is being realised.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders at all levels demonstrate consistent and effective leadership. This leadership, alongside their ability to accurately evaluate the school, has ensured that pupils achieve highly. Leaders are committed to ensuring that the school continues to provide a continued high-quality offer. The culture that leaders have created ensures that there is a sense of belonging across the school community.

Governors understand their roles precisely. Clear communication between the layers of leadership means that information is exchanged with clarity. This enables governors, including trustees, to provide sharp and focused challenge or support where needed.

Staff appreciate the regular professional learning opportunities given to them. Opportunities for them to develop as teachers, and in wider roles, are regular and focused. Newer staff are prioritised and are given development opportunities that ensure that they understand and implement the school's policies consistently. Staff's workload and wellbeing are a priority for leaders. This is considered in all actions that leaders take.

Leaders have prioritised the personal development offer. They are proud of the broad programme to develop pupils' cultural capital. Regular, well-considered trips are always linked to wider aspects of learning. For example, pupils visited a mosque to further their knowledge of different faiths and cultures. Leaders have also focused on pupils' speaking skills over recent years. Opportunities for pupils to speak out loud, present their learning and work collaboratively with peers have enabled them to be cooperative, build important social skills and widen their vocabulary.

The personal, social and health education curriculum is well considered. It identifies the important knowledge that pupils need to learn. This universal offer ensures that all pupils, including those who face barriers to their learning, learn about important topics, such as human rights, peer pressure and stereotyping. Children in the early years build independence quickly as a result of the clear and well-developed curriculum. Leaders have not shied away from ensuring that pupils learn about more challenging concepts, such as money management.

The school's character curriculum is interwoven into aspects of school life. The school's values of respect, ambition and pride are explicitly taught and practised in classrooms, assemblies and celebration events. This includes debates about world issues, or voting on aspects of the school that pupils would like to improve. Pupil voice is a strong driver for change at the school. Pupils feel empowered as a result. Their knowledge and understanding of equalities are secure. Pupils respect and understand difference and apply it to their own lives.

An array of additional activities is carefully tracked by leaders. This ensures that all pupils have equitable access to these. Adaptations are also well considered. This includes ensuring that pupils who are disabled can participate in sports activities. No pupil is left behind.

Expected standard

Early years

Expected standard

The curriculum in the early years clearly identifies and sequences what the school wants children to learn. Staff get to know children quickly and use assessment to identify the stage of learning they are at. Leaders have prioritised building foundational knowledge securely. For example, children are given regular opportunities to sit at tables and practise their pencil grip and letter formation. This helps them to secure these skills before they move on to more challenging learning. Children are then ready for key stage 1.

Children play happily with the inviting activities set out for them. In particular, children are given appropriate opportunities to practise their motor skills. Occasionally, staff do not ensure that children make use of some areas of the provision. This means children miss opportunities to deepen their learning.

Regular opportunities are given to children to be able to learn to read outside of phonics. The development of vocabulary is a feature of the provision. Interactions with children ensure that their care needs are met and they feel safe.

Staff build positive relationships with parents and carers. Parents feel well supported with the transition into school life. Additional support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is quickly put in place. For example, children who need additional help with their speaking get time to practise this through effective interventions.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

There is a warm and friendly environment at Birdwell Primary School. The corridors are filled with inspiring artwork, high-quality and inviting books and displays that celebrate pupils' achievements. All staff demonstrate high expectations of pupils in every aspect of school life. Pupils demonstrate exemplary behaviour. They welcome visitors warmly and use their manners in every interaction with adults and peers. Pupils feel safe and bullying is rare.

The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve well. Leaders' relentless focus on removing barriers for all pupils has led to strong achievement over time. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make impressive progress from their starting points. In lessons, pupils demonstrate resilience in learning when approaching activities. They do not shy away from a challenge. Older pupils speak with confidence about what they have learned. They are well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils attend regularly. They are punctual and move sensibly into their classrooms to begin learning. Opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their leadership skills are wide ranging. From the school's 'sustainability ambassadors' to the 'tuck shop monitors', all pupils are given the opportunity to learn important skills such as working with others and speaking clearly to an audience. Enrichment activities are tracked carefully by the school. Leaders ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to take part in the array of extra-curricular activities. As a result of the school's work, pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders should support all staff to implement the curriculum in the early years as intended to ensure that children have further opportunities to develop, practise and learn new knowledge across all aspects of the curriculum.

About this inspection

This school is part of HCAT, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Tom Banham, and

overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Michael Knight.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with senior leaders, including the executive headteacher, middle leaders, teachers and pupils during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with the chair of trustees and chair of the local governance committee.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Head of School: Richard Swallow

Lead inspector:

Katie Hall, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Simon Swift, Ofsted Inspector

Rowena Sykes, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 20 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

188

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

210

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

22.87%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

0.00%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

17.02%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		61%	
2024/25 (revised)	85%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	82%	61%	Above
2022/23		60%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		74%	
2024/25 (revised)	89%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	91%	74%	Above
2022/23		73%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		72%	
2024/25 (revised)	93%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	82%	72%	Above
2022/23		71%	

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		73%	
2024/25 (revised)	93%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	91%	73%	Above
2022/23		73%	

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		46%	
2024/25 (revised)	75%	47%	Above
2023/24 (final)	S	46%	S
2022/23		44%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		62%	
2024/25 (revised)	75%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	S	62%	S
2022/23		60%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		59%	
2024/25 (revised)	88%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	S	58%	S
2022/23		58%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		60%	
2024/25 (revised)	75%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	S	59%	S
2022/23		59%	

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		68%	
2024/25 (revised)	75%	69%	6 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	67%	S
2022/23		66%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	75%	81%	-6 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	80%	S
2022/23		78%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		78%	
2024/25 (revised)	88%	78%	9 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	78%	S

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23		77%	

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25 (revised)	75%	81%	-6 pp
2023/24 (final)	S	79%	S
2022/23		79%	

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	3.4%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.1%	5.5%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	5.0%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	7.4%	14.6%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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