

Inspection of a good school: Bishopton PRU

Marsh House Avenue, Billingham, Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland TS23 3HB

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 February 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The acting headteacher of this school is Tristan Keates. This school is part of Tees Valley Collaborative Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the interim chief executive officer, Nichole Munro, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Keith Hurst.

What is it like to attend this school?

Bishopton PRU is experiencing ongoing leadership turbulence. Several leaders hold interim positions. The trust is providing extra leadership capacity. The school has faced considerable staffing changes. These include changes to teaching positions and curriculum leadership. These factors have contributed negatively to the school's work to provide a quality education for pupils.

The school's buildings are receiving significant upgrades. They are being redeveloped to meet the needs of pupils further. This includes development work to add extra classrooms and a variety of vocational learning spaces. The learning environment is modern and well resourced. Pupils respect the ongoing investment to improve their surroundings and the places in which they learn.

Most pupils enjoy attending the school. They recognise the positive impact of the school's work in supporting them to get back on track with education. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning show steady signs of improvement. However, pupils' irregular attendance across the school is challenging. Many pupils are regularly missing school. Pupils conduct themselves positively around school when they do attend. They feel safe in school. Staff know pupils well. This ensures that they get the best from pupils.

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

Over time, a combination of challenges has interrupted the school's work to develop the curriculum. The school has not adopted a phonics scheme for early readers and does not have a reading strategy for all pupils. Interim leaders have correctly identified that curriculum development had lost momentum. In recognition, they have taken action to strengthen the curriculum across key stages. This work is ongoing. Staff make adaptations to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This ensures all pupils access the curriculum well. The school is carefully supporting and developing staff. Many staff have multiple responsibilities. These include curriculum leadership. Some curriculum leaders are early in their careers. They are developing their curriculum practice and leadership skills.

Pupils' behaviour around school is well managed. Many pupils need ongoing support to regulate their emotions. Pupils' behaviour has improved over the last year. There is less disruption. Bullying is rare in the school. Staff intervene swiftly to help pupils if necessary. Low-level disruption in lessons is common. This negatively impacts on pupils' ability to learn. Pupils' irregular attendance is challenging. Many pupils are persistently absent. Some pupils do not arrive at school on time. Pupils placed on part-time timetables add to the school's attendance challenges. Attendance is too low for far too many pupils. Staff check pupils' attendance daily. There is a lack of detailed monitoring of the attendance of groups of pupils, particularly those with SEND and the most vulnerable.

The school ensures pupils learn about the risks that they may face in the community. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe while using technology. The curriculum helps pupils to develop their understanding of healthy lifestyles, relationships and the wider world. There is careers support for pupils in Year 11. They visit colleges and receive advice on the next steps in their lives. Community trips support social skills and prepare pupils for adulthood. These include supporting food banks and helping in community shops. There is a student council that influences school life. Staff promote debate in registration time. Assemblies, with rewards, shine a light on pupils' achievements. They recognise, for example, pupils being kind to each other.

Staff are supported with their workload and well-being. They have seen significant improvements in the last year, particularly around pupils' behaviour. This is due to more skilled staff, the new building design and higher staff expectations. Interim leaders ensure staff's mental health is taken seriously. Staff use assessment appropriately to check pupils' learning and to inform their curriculum decisions. Governors are better informed to support and challenge the school. They have overseen a decline in the school, its stabilisation and the beginning of improvement. Trustees are realistic. They understand the challenges that the school has experienced and continues to face.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first. Interim leaders ensure staff are well prepared to support pupils. Staff are kept up to date by online training, weekly safeguarding briefings and formal professional development. Interim leaders share local safeguarding matters as they occur. This helps staff to support

pupils. Staff record their safeguarding interventions in an electronic information management system. Most entries are detailed. However, some follow-up actions undertaken by the school are not clear. They do not identify what action was taken, by whom and when.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not have an embedded strategy, including staff professional development, for phonics and reading. This means that pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. The school should quickly implement an early reading phonics scheme and a reading strategy.
- Many curriculum leaders are new to teaching and new to their curriculum leadership role. This means that the curriculum is not as well developed as it should be. The school should continue to support curriculum leaders to lead and develop their subjects effectively.
- Attendance is too low for too many pupils. Some pupils do not arrive at school punctually. Pupils placed on part-time timetables miss important lessons. These pupils miss too much learning. The school should improve attendance monitoring for groups of pupils, particularly those with SEND and the most vulnerable. The school should work with parents and carers to ensure that they support their children to attend school regularly and punctually. The school should carefully work to reduce the number of pupils who are placed on part-time timetables.
- Staff record their safeguarding interventions in an electronic information management system. Some actions and follow-up activities are not reported clearly. They do not detail with clarity what action was taken, by which member of staff and when. This makes it hard to track staff involvement and the support that they provide to pupils and their families. The school should ensure that all records clearly detail the actions and follow-up activities that staff take to safeguard pupils.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Bishopton Centre, to be good in June 2017.

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	148601
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10297546
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Keith Hurst
Acting Headteacher	Tristan Keates
Website	https://bishopton.tvc.ac.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Bishopton PRU converted to become an academy school in May 2021. When its predecessor school, Bishopton Centre, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Bishopton PRU is a pupil referral unit providing education for up to 65 pupils aged between 11 and 16. Some pupils are dual registered. This means they are on the roll of two schools: the commissioning school and Bishopton PRU.
- Bishopton PRU is part of Tees Valley Collaborative Trust, a multi-academy trust.
- The acting headteacher has been in post since January 2024.
- Pupils join the school throughout the academic year.
- There is a high proportion of pupils with SEND. Many have social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school does not use any alternative education providers.
- The school measures itself against the Gatsby benchmarks to ensure pupils receive high-quality careers advice.

- 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

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the acting headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, acting SENCo, curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The lead inspector met the interim chief executive of the trust and members of the board of trustees. The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, 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. The provision for teaching reading was also closely scrutinised.
- 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.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans.
- Inspectors looked at a range of information regarding behaviour. They observed the behaviour of pupils in classrooms and at social times.
- The lead inspector held telephone discussions with a small number of parents.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, staff and parents. This included any free-text responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

David Mills, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

David Milligan

Ofsted Inspector

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