

St Ambrose Barlow Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106510
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	377416
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2011
Reporting inspector	David Byrne

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Delia Fletcher
Headteacher	Bernard Dorgan
Date of previous school inspection	04 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 15 lessons, taught by eight teachers. They conducted meetings with pupils, staff and representatives of the governing body and held a discussion with a selection of parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at records of pupils' progress, reviewed the procedures employed to secure pupils' health and safety and evaluated samples of the pupils' work. They scrutinised questionnaires returned by pupils and the 53 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The achievement of higher attaining pupils and whether there are any differences in the progress of any groups in all subjects.
- The impact of strategies for widening the curriculum on pupils' creativity.
- Whether the quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding as reported by the school.
- Whether the school has a long term vision for its development which avoids complacency.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils are White British and smaller than average proportions are from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language.

The school has a number of awards including, Financial Management Systems in Schools (FMSiS), National Healthy Schools Status, Activemark and School Sports Coordinator Gold Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school which prepares pupils exceptionally well for the next stage of their education. Attainment is high and achievement and enjoyment are outstanding. These outstanding outcomes are due to the impact of excellent levels of care, guidance and support, high quality teaching and excellent leadership by the headteacher who is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher. Partnerships with parents and carers are very productive and their engagement in school life is outstanding. They are virtually unanimous in their support of the school which is reported to give everyone in the school community a sense of belonging.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and underpins their exemplary behaviour and excellent relationships. Pupils develop into confident and caring young people. Most have an extremely advanced understanding of their own safety and how to live healthily. Pupils 'cannot wait to get into school each morning', reflecting their enthusiasm for learning. This explains why rates of attendance are consistently high.

Progress across the school is rapid for all groups of pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Attainment rises at an excellent rate and by the end of Year 6 it is consistently high. Higher attaining pupils do very well. The proportion of pupils exceeding the expectations for their age at Year 6 is exceptional with a particular strength in reading and mathematics. The school also has a justified reputation for the quality of singing and for its performance in aspects of sport. The curriculum places a great emphasis on the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. However, strategies for pupils to apply their high order skills independently and transfer their skills to real life situations are not yet effective enough.

At the heart of the school is the headteacher who has been instrumental in creating an approach to learning that is consistently followed by all staff. Every family and child is very well known and all pupils are valued. Excellent partnerships with others enhance learning. The school is respected by other professionals and increasingly used as a model of good practice. There is, however, no complacency and staff seek new ideas and carefully consider ways to improve. An accurate self-evaluation is based on the excellent use of assessment, discussions with pupils and reviews of their work. There is a proven track record of improvement, for example, in raising the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage from good to

outstanding, and this gives it an excellent capacity to improve further. The outstanding outcomes for pupils mean that its value for money is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the skills of pupils even further by:
 - widening opportunities for them to apply their advanced skills of literacy and numeracy independently to real life situations.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils are captivated by learning. They thrive on acquiring new facts and exploring new ideas, and they persevere to do their best. While exploring the factors in numbers during a mental starter element of a mathematics lesson, a real sense of excitement was evident among Year 6 pupils as they worked hard to be the first to identify the factors and also to explain the features of a prime number. Pupils show great pride in their work which demonstrates their care and attention to detail.

Achievement is outstanding because attainment is consistently high and learning and progress are outstanding. From starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage which are broadly in line with expectations for their age, most pupils move on rapidly to exceed expectations for their age by the start of Year 1 in all areas of development. Their progress in reading is quite exceptional, reinforced by very effective steps to strengthen the way letters and sounds and spelling is taught to younger pupils up to the age of seven. In writing, pupils demonstrate excellent handwriting skills and use grammar, spelling and punctuation well for their age. Their composition of text is of a high standard. In mathematics, pupils develop a secure understanding of basic numbers and operations and of higher order concepts. They have the capacity to apply such knowledge and understandings to solve mathematical problems.

Pupils report that they feel safe at all times. They know how to conduct themselves well. Responding to clear guidance about desirable behaviour and a deep rooted respect for others, aggressive behaviour is virtually non-existent. Pupils know and understand how to live healthily. They enjoy being active at playtimes and thrive on testing their skills on the brand new outdoor trim trail. Pupils have an excellent understanding of dangers related to poor eating and abusing drugs such as tobacco. Many pupils are mature and responsible for their age and willingly get involved in running aspects of school life – the Eco Council is determined to save the planet and the sports council is keen to arrange a wide range of sports activities. Pupils appreciate features of different cultures and challenge discrimination and racist behaviour in society.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

A major strength of the school that has a significant impact on pupils' learning is the high levels of consistency in the way teachers work. Lessons are very well constructed, fast paced in their delivery and clear in what is expected. Assessment is thorough and informs teachers' planning. All staff set high expectations and pay attention to detail, for example, about the presentation of pupils' work. All have warm respectful relationships with pupils and have a detailed knowledge of the each pupil. Desirable behaviour is rewarded and pupils develop an awareness of how to treat others. Lessons are brought to life at times by a good use of drama, for example, Year 4 pupils benefited from taking on the role of 'Marcus', a Roman soldier, in order to prompt writing to reflect the soldier's point of view in the events around Boudicca's revolt. Staff and pupils work together in evaluating how well pupils are achieving. Marking is prompt and increasingly giving specific guidance to the pupils about the next steps to improve. Excellent teamwork with dedicated teaching assistants offers tailored support to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are underachieving.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, successfully balancing the promotion of academic achievement with personal development. In addition to the good provision for English and mathematics, the curriculum has strengths in aspects of music, a wide range of activities related to physical education and also in Spanish. While most pupils have good levels of independence, there are too few chances for pupils to lead their own learning and apply their high attainment in literacy and numeracy to real life contexts. Pupils benefit from access to a good range of extra-curricular clubs provided by staff, some of which develop their creativity. Visits, such as that to an outdoor education centre, assist in widening pupils' understanding of the world beyond their locality.

'This is a school where everyone is wrapped in love and care', is a typical comment from parents and carers, who correctly rate care, guidance and support as being outstanding. Close links with external agencies provides additional support where required. Pupils of all abilities make exceptional progress due to well-planned support and pupils with emotional difficulties are nurtured to have self-belief. Good induction procedures settle children and families into school in the Early Years Foundation Stage quickly and excellent arrangements for pupils moving on to secondary school ease their transition.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are highly effective in identifying exactly the needs of pupils attending St Ambrose Barlow. Very much at the heart of the school's ethos is that every child matters and discrimination or racist behaviour is unacceptable. High ambitions for pupils are shared by all involved with the school and this drives the school forward. Continuous professional development is given a high priority and enables staff to acquire new skills and develop and refine their existing strengths. Excellent systems for evaluating the school's performance lead to the identification of highly relevant areas for its improvement and the setting of high targets for pupils' performance. The impact of the strategies for raising achievement is evident in the way that pupils have attained highly for year after year and exceeded all targets. The governing body provides good support for the school. It knows the school well and is instrumental in influencing aspects of its performance, although is not fully involved in all aspects of school development planning. It ensures that statutory requirements related to safeguarding are fully met, the school is safe and secure and procedures for child protection are robust.

Parents and carers are engaged with the school and are close partners in their children's education. Their views are respected and responded to, and, at times, daily contact between staff and parents and carers adds to the high quality of information provided for them. Access to a high quality and informative website, as well as texting systems, mean that communication is quick and at times instant. The school does much to promote cohesion within the community and among pupils and families. Those of different cultures and religions are respected and valued. An understanding of diversity in the wider world is promoted through the curriculum but pupils have limited experience of meeting or communicating with pupils of different backgrounds. Excellent partnerships with other schools, educational consultants and practitioners in health, education and social care benefit all pupils and staff development.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1

The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children receive an excellent start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result of high quality teaching, very effective leadership and management and a secure and stimulating learning area, all children make rapid progress. Most children start school with levels of development that are typical for their age and start Year 1 with attainment that is above expectations. Teaching and support staff provide a wide range of activities for children to choose from, all linked to essential areas for learning for children at this age. Resources are organised to enable children to select a range of well-planned learning activities both indoors and out. Since the last inspection, the creation of a high quality outdoor area enables children to move seamlessly between indoor and outdoor learning.

Good attention is given to promoting speaking and the pattern of language. Children enjoy experiencing nursery rhymes and other effectively taught activities, through which they extend their understanding of letters and sounds which helps them to make a good start with reading and writing. Children’s awareness of how to be safe and healthy is successfully promoted – for example, when building a tent one girl was adamant that it was unsafe to stand on the plastic box they were using.

The leader of the setting manages its provision very effectively to give pupils the best possible deal. Children are safe and secure at all times and their well-being is of the highest priority. Assessment is well organised and accurate and used to identify individual needs to support and challenge as required. Parents and carers are valued partners in their children’s education and encouraged to support learning at home.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The number of questionnaires returned was slightly below average for a primary school. However, of those returned, the vast majority of parents and carers rate the school highly. Much praise is given to the quality of leadership by the headteacher who is reported to know every child and family and to care for everyone. Staff are said to be very visible at the start and end of the day and easy to approach; communication is rated very highly. They praise the behaviour promoted and the attention given to encouraging positive relationships between pupils. The school is reported to be a strong part of the community and to contribute to many aspects of

local life. The inspection findings agree with the strengths identified by almost all parents and carers returning their questionnaires.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Ambrose Barlow Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 53 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 206 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	74	10	19	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	68	13	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	53	24	45	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	66	17	32	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	68	17	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	58	21	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	49	26	49	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	31	58	19	36	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	55	21	40	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	55	22	42	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	49	21	40	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	31	58	20	38	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	70	16	30	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 September 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic Primary School, Manchester,
M29 7DY**

On behalf of my colleagues I wish to thank all of you for being so friendly and welcoming during our recent visit to your school. You attend a school which is outstanding which means it is giving you all an excellent quality of education.

The main reason for this is the dedication of your staff and the excellent leadership of your headteacher. You get an excellent start in the Early Years Foundation Stage which sets you up well for school later on. Your teachers successfully challenge you all and do their best to help you if you find anything difficult. Your behaviour is exemplary and the way you treat others with respect is admirable. Your attainment in English and mathematics when you leave school is high. You also develop confidence and to work with others and speak publicly. You have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and are sensible about keeping healthy. Your high attendance reflects the great desire you have to learn new ideas and skills. Your parents and carers are very happy with the school and receive excellent information through the website and the texting.

There are always some things that could even better. While most of you are confident young people, more opportunities could be given for you to apply your excellent skills to work independently within real life situations.

I wish you all the very best for your futures and hope you all continue to be happy and caring citizens.

Yours sincerely

David Byrne
Lead inspector

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