

Barlows Primary School

Barlows Lane, Fazakerley, Liverpool, Merseyside L9 9EH

Inspection dates

13–14 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Actions taken by leaders and governors have not been sufficient to sustain pupils' outcomes since the last inspection. Pupils' achievement requires improvement. The most able pupils are not challenged enough. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is patchy across the school.
- Leaders and governors do not check the work of the school well because plans and targets lack clarity. Some reviews of the school's performance are overgenerous.
- The school website is difficult to use and some required information is missing.
- The quality of teaching varies and not enough is good over time. Gaps in pupils' skills in mathematics and writing are not always tackled successfully.
- While pupils' attendance at the school is improving, not all pupils attend as much as they should.
- Due to significant changes in staffing, some leaders have needed to take on too many additional responsibilities. They do not have enough time to complete all of their work fully. The school has not adapted its work quickly enough to the new national curriculum.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, staff and governors make sure that pupils gain much valuable understanding about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of life in Liverpool, modern Britain and beyond.
- Leaders have an increasingly clear and honest understanding of the challenges they need to overcome in order for the school to once again provide the best quality of education.
- Across classes, pupils make good progress in reading. They enjoy a wide range of literature at school. Good use is made of stories in teaching from Nursery to Year 6.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are supported skilfully by teachers and teaching assistants. Children gain a valuable head start to their education.
- Throughout the school, pupils look after one another and their school thoughtfully. They show positive attitudes and are very polite and self-confident. Pupils' behaviour is good.
- Pupils learn well in computing and in science.
- Children and pupils are protected and cared for very well. They feel safe at school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in key stages 1 and 2 by:
 - providing the most able pupils with enough challenge in lessons so they learn and achieve in greater depth
 - making full use of assessment to adapt activities to pupils' needs
 - adapting teaching and learning to the expectations of the new national curriculum so pupils achieve well, particularly in their writing and mathematics skills
 - giving disadvantaged pupils enough extra assistance for their learning, so they make swift progress and achieve as well as other pupils nationally.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - sharpening leaders' and governors' plans and reviews of the school and targets set for the work of individual staff to show precisely how success will be assured
 - making sure that leaders have enough time to fulfil their roles and responsibilities
 - making sure that the school website is easy for parents to use and contains all required information.
- Increase steps to set and enforce high expectations for pupils' attendance at school.

An external review of the use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Too many responsibilities have rested on the shoulders of the acting headteacher. Governors have not made sure that enough time has been available for some leaders to undertake their roles. This, plus significant changes in staffing, has held leaders back from implementing the changes needed to ensure a speedy recovery and improved outcomes and teaching.
- Some of the school's 2015–18 improvement plan and targets set for improving individual staff performance are not precise or measurable enough. Current leaders have an increasingly accurate understanding of the key issues facing the school and are taking steps to improve the education provided. However, some evaluation of the work of the school is too generous and this is hampering the focus on the correct priorities.
- Pupil premium and special needs funding is not always planned, spent and reviewed effectively. There is not enough precision to make sure that, as a result of the additional funding, pupils' learning is improving rapidly. However, physical education and sports premium funding is used well to increase pupils' skills and participation in sport.
- Parents receive a wide range of information to help them understand their children's learning and the subjects studied. Lots of extra information is provided on the school website. However, the school does not publish some required information online. The school website is cumbersome to use.
- Where leaders have developed a clear focus on key issues affecting pupils' education, for example in pupils learning to read, teaching and pupils' achievement are beginning to improve. Where leaders have sufficient time to develop their work, for example in developing the school's computing curriculum, their work results in strong provision for pupils' learning.
- The school curriculum is good. Activities are designed carefully to make sure that pupils benefit from a diverse range of opportunities to understand the world. For example, pupils enjoy links with a school in Nepal, regular school trips and activities to develop their understanding of philosophy. Such opportunities are balanced with after-school activities such as cooking and dance. Pupils enjoy many opportunities to learn Spanish. Their knowledge of Spanish is enhanced by hosting staff and student teachers from Spain, as well seeing some key labels displayed around the school in English and Spanish.
- Staff are increasingly accessing a wide range of training and opportunities to link with other schools. Recently qualified teachers say that they are very well supported in the start they have made to their exciting new careers.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is given much attention. In part, this means many themed weeks that give careful focus to a topic, for example Black history, fundraising, learning about fair trade and experiencing all aspects of creating and performing an opera. As a result, pupils are becoming respectful, engaged young citizens who are ready for living in the diverse world of modern Britain and beyond.

Governance of the school

- Governors recognise the dip in pupils' outcomes in 2016. They challenge leaders about improvement and standards. However, they are not making sure that pupil premium funding is making enough difference to the learning of disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors are very well informed about the broad curriculum at the school. They visit the school regularly to make sure that pupils are enjoying activities and feel safe and valued. However, governors' views of the school are overgenerous because school plans and targets do not help them to review the work of the school accurately.
- Governors have given much support to the school during many changes in staffing but have not made enough time available for leaders to undertake their roles.
- Governors make sure that the safeguarding of pupils and school finances are checked and reviewed frequently.
- Governors are not making sure that the school website meets requirements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The organisation of safeguarding in the school is well considered. For example, there are always several staff present with high levels of training and understanding who can deal with any issue that might arise.
- Staff are given regular, up-to-date training and information about how to protect themselves and pupils. The recording of concerns is thorough and information is shared properly between staff and with other agencies.
- Leaders and governors have a good understanding of what steps the school has taken to make sure that all internet use at school is filtered for inappropriate material.
- Staff and leaders take many steps to educate parents and pupils about how to stay safe, for example when using the internet or social media.
- Arrangements to check the suitability of staff and visitors are extremely thorough. Records are maintained very carefully by the school bursar, including from pre-employment interviews.
- The school's policies and procedures for safeguarding are up to date and adapted carefully to the school's circumstances.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching in the school did not adapt well to some of the higher expectations of the new national curriculum in 2015/16. Subsequently, the quality of teaching dipped. Although leaders are tackling gaps in teachers' understanding of these national changes, inconsistencies remain in teachers' skills to close gaps in pupils' learning in key stages 1 and 2.
- In some subjects and classes, there is successful teaching of new learning and support for pupils. In other examples, staff give too little or too much help to pupils.

- Staff and leaders have taken firm steps to make sure that their assessments of pupils are accurate and checked well with other schools. Nonetheless, assessment is not always used fully when planning or adapting teaching. Consequently, when pupils find work too easy in their writing or mathematics, their interest in learning reduces.
- Teaching is not adapted enough to help the most able pupils to explore their learning in deeper, more complex ways. The work set and the support given is not tailored enough to stretch pupils' abilities.
- Teaching assistants' expertise is valued and there are many examples of good teamwork with teachers in classes. On occasion, the work of teaching assistants is not checked well by the teacher. At these times, pupils are given too much assistance when finding the answers to questions set in their work.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are given some good individual support in lessons. However, teaching does not always take account of the important insights into pupils' learning held by all relevant staff. This weakness holds some pupils back from achieving even more.
- The school applies its policy on homework consistently.
- Pupils' learning behaviour is good in classes and they are keen to learn. They arrive for lessons promptly. They enjoy learning and cooperate well in activities.
- Classrooms, corridors and stairwells throughout the school celebrate learning positively through attractive displays of pupils' work. Large-scale photographs, taken by the pupils, are displayed very well on the walls.
- Good-quality relationships between staff and pupils mean that lessons run smoothly.
- Where pupils learn well, teachers make good use of their subject knowledge and they plan for lessons thoroughly. For example, in a key stage 2 activity about the Victorians, pupils were highly enthused by a photograph showing a Victorian classroom. Pupils identified many questions that they wanted to answer as a result.
- The teaching of reading is good and children are becoming confident readers as a result.
- Teaching often extends pupils' language successfully. For example, in a practical science activity, staff expected pupils to use and understand the words 'constant' and 'variable'. Such skilful support is helping pupils to make good progress in science, particularly in key stage 2.
- Across subjects and classes, information and communication technology is used thoughtfully to help pupils understand new concepts, as well as to teach computing and to help pupils search for information online.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils know this is a school where their views and opinions matter. They are given many opportunities to learn about and respect different points of view. They learn

much about different people's culture, religion and language.

- Pupils are keen learners who can cooperate, be independent, make reasoned choices and who feel good about themselves and their lives.
- Pupils experience a wide range of extra activities at school. They learn much about their community, their city and the wider world. Thus, they develop a good understanding of the features of mountains in the Lake District, as much as a first-hand knowledge of how to grow vegetables in a local allotment.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example when online, when meeting strangers or when travelling on or near roads. They say that bullying is not an issue at the school and they know how to report any concerns that may arise.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They show good self-control in classrooms. Disruption in lessons is rare. Pupils know and follow what staff expect of their behaviour. Pupils move around the school sensibly and act calmly in the dining hall and outdoors.
- Pupils conduct themselves very well when meeting visitors and they are extremely polite. They hold the door open for any adult they meet around the school.
- Barlows is a modern and attractive school premises, in which learning is visibly and positively celebrated in displays. Pupils take great care of their school environment and opt to take roles where they can to help the school improve.
- Pupils respect differences between themselves and others and include others in their play and activities.
- School information shows that, following concerted efforts, levels of pupils' persistent absence are dropping rapidly. The overall level of pupils' attendance is improving steadily year on year. Many successful actions are in place to improve attendance, for example a regular whole-school assembly positively involves pupils announcing how much overall attendance is improving. Pupils then give an award to the class with the highest attendance. Despite these endeavours, attendance remains below average and not all pupils attend regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In the past, pupils have achieved well from their starting points. However, their progress and attainment in 2016 was poor. This was the period when the new national curriculum assessments in reading, writing and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2 were implemented. This information cannot be directly compared with that for previous years as the assessments are different and expectations of pupils have been raised. Nevertheless, pupils did not achieve as well as needed.
- Several changes of staffing as well as variability in the quality of teaching in 2016 affected pupils' achievement. While pupils' learning is beginning to improve across the school, variability remains in the quality of teaching during 2017. As a result, pupils' overall achievement is inconsistent.

- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not achieving as much as they can. Assessment is not always used well to adapt activities to pupils' needs and to make sure that pupils are given enough challenge in their learning.
- In mathematics and writing, some current pupils are not catching up rapidly enough to make up for gaps in their skills and knowledge.
- Some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make individually significant steps forward in their learning. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching are holding some pupils back from making stronger progress.
- Extra funding through the pupil premium is not having enough impact on the learning of disadvantaged pupils. While some do well, others are not catching up. Some current disadvantaged pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are behind their classmates in their learning.
- As a result of a lack of challenge in activities, the most able disadvantaged pupils are not always making fast enough progress to achieve all of which they are capable.
- Pupils' ability to read unfamiliar words in the Year 1 phonics screening check is above the national average and rising each year. Girls, boys and disadvantaged pupils are all developing a strong understanding of the sounds that letters make.
- Progress in reading is now good. Across the school, current pupils learn to read with much skill and confidence. For example, in Year 6, a large majority of pupils are on track to do well in reading for their age.
- In key stage 2 in 2016, pupils did better than pupils nationally in science. In contrast, pupils' attainment in key stage 1 was below the national average. Pupils across the school are now beginning to achieve more successfully in science because of much-improved teaching in this subject. In computing, pupils are learning well across the school.
- Although gaps remain for some pupils in writing and mathematics, improvements are evident, especially in reading. Pupils are developing positive attitudes to learning. They are skilled at working in teams. They know how to act responsibly. These skills are helping them to be prepared for continuing their learning at secondary school.

Early years provision

Good

- The quality of education provided in the Nursery and Reception classes is good and improving because of skilful teaching, strong teamwork between staff and successful leadership.
- The classrooms are resourced well, organised thoughtfully and used carefully to support learning. For example, numbers and counting activities are widely available and used for teaching because assessments show this is where children have the least skills when starting school at three years old.
- The curriculum is planned thoughtfully. This means that children learn through many valuable activities such as making music, investigating scientific concepts like magnetism and learning traditional stories and tales.
- The outdoor area is attractive and planned carefully for a range of learning. For example, children were deeply engaged in building dens with a member of staff.

Questions were challenging and helped children to think carefully and design their creations with great skill and care.

- Staff have a well-informed understanding of how young children learn and develop as well as knowing national requirements for the early years. As a result, they plan an exciting, meaningful and worthwhile range of activities for children. Teachers and teaching assistants ably support children to explore, solve problems and build relationships.
- Children love coming to school because their learning is exciting. Reception children were observed totally absorbed in creating a street scene with small toy cars, animals and bricks. This followed a walk earlier in the day around the local area with staff. Children explained very clearly what they had learned, including new words, and could explain in detail what they were now constructing and why.
- Children in Nursery and Reception are becoming confident, skilled learners. Their behaviour is excellent and they have high emotional well-being, which helps them to settle easily in activities. They are learning to talk and write, use and recognise numbers and read with great care.
- In 2016 and already this year, improved teaching in the Nursery ensures that children are even better prepared for Reception class than in the past.
- Skilled teaching in the Reception class is making sure that the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is rising year on year and is broadly average. Current school information shows that children in Reception are making good progress because of improved teaching. Leaders recognise that they have even more to do in using early years pupil premium funding to help diminish the difference in attainment between disadvantaged children and other children nationally.
- Staff have a good understanding of how to protect and care for children.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths of the early years in the school and the priorities for improvement. Staff have good access to training and development opportunities to help improve their work. This impacts well on the quality of teaching and learning.

School details

Unique reference number	104517
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10032805

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	478
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fiona Chambers
Acting Headteacher	Stacey Feenan
Telephone number	0151 525 2751
Website	www.barlowsprimary.co.uk
Email address	barlows-ao@barlows.liverpool.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 January 2010

Information about this school

- Barlows is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Most children are White British.
- The proportion of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is below average.

- The proportion of children eligible for support through the government's pupil premium funding is below average.
- The school leads and manages Fazakerley and Croxteth Children's Centres.
- The school provides and manages morning and after-school club provision on site.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the curriculum, governance, PE and sports premium funding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning and teaching in classrooms, outdoors and in two assemblies. The inspectors reviewed examples of pupils' work. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) made a series of observations with the acting headteacher.
- Inspectors spoke to parents as they brought their children to school and considered 70 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspectors spoke to pupils in classes and around the school. One inspector spoke to a sample of 20 pupils chosen at random from Years 2, 4, 5 and 6. Inspectors listened to some pupils read.
- Inspectors spoke with several staff throughout the inspection, including the acting headteacher. Inspectors considered responses from 45 staff to an Ofsted questionnaire.
- On the first day of the inspection, HMI met with two members of the governing body, including the chair. On the second day, HMI met again with the chair of governors.
- HMI met with a representative of Liverpool local authority.
- Inspectors considered a range of school documents including reviews of how well the school is doing, plans for the future and information about the progress of current pupils.
- Inspectors met with leaders and the school bursar to discuss the work of the school to care and protect pupils. Inspectors checked a sample of school records and policies relating to child protection.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Barbara Harrold	Ofsted Inspector
Barbara Dutton	Ofsted Inspector
Saeeda Ishaq	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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