

St Ambrose Barlow RC High School

37 Ash Drive, Wardley, Swinton, Manchester M27 9QP

Inspection dates

7–8 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Changes in staffing and leadership since the last inspection has led to inconsistency in the quality of teaching, which partially accounts for pupils' lack of progress.
- In 2017 and 2018, Year 11 pupils did not make good progress across a range of subjects. The achievement of current pupils is beginning to improve.
- Senior leaders do not evaluate critically how well action taken meets the intended improvements. As a result, improvements are not rapid.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do. Consequently, some pupils, including those who are most able, are not challenged to achieve as well as they could.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make variable progress across the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve well enough. However, the differences between their outcomes and those of other pupils nationally are getting smaller.
- Students in the sixth form do not make consistently good progress because the quality of teaching is too variable.
- Middle leaders are not currently as effective as they need to be in raising standards.
- There is some low-level disruption in lessons which limits learning. A small minority of pupils behave in a boisterous way during social times.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher supported by his governors has steered the school through a turbulent time. Together they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders are making changes that are leading to improved teaching.
- Pupils' attendance is in line with the national average.
- The curriculum has been reviewed and meets the needs of pupils. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Careers education and guidance are good. Most pupils go on to take up places in education, employment or training.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders monitor and review the progress and impact of their plans more effectively so that improvements are more rapid
 - building on recent improvements to diminish further the difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally
 - ensuring that middle leaders' skills and knowledge are used more effectively to support staff to raise standards and improve outcomes for pupils
 - building on current initiatives for those pupils with SEND so that the provision for these pupils improves.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or those with SEND, make good progress by:
 - having high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that all teachers provide pupils, including the most able, with work that is appropriately challenging.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - using the school's behaviour system consistently to eliminate instances of disruption in and outside lessons.
- Improve the provision in the sixth form by ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school has experienced significant changes in staffing and leadership since the last inspection. This has led to inconsistency in teaching and learning which has had a negative impact on pupils' progress.
- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and wants it to be an inclusive community where every child succeeds. He, along with his senior team and governors, are determined to make the school better. Leaders have secured stability in staffing in almost all subject areas.
- Leaders' and governors' capacity for further improvement is demonstrated by the improvement in the curriculum and teaching since the previous inspection. As a result, current pupils' outcomes are beginning to improve. Nevertheless, despite some positive changes, several weaker areas identified in the last inspection still require improvement.
- Leaders have a precise understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Improvement plans focus on the correct priorities. However, leaders do not check and review the impact of actions effectively enough to know exactly what has worked and where further action is required. Consequently, the pace of improvement is not as brisk as it needs to be.
- Leaders have developed systems to monitor the quality of teaching and have an accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching. Leaders have appointed lead practitioners in a range of subjects to help teachers improve their skills.
- Middle leadership has been strengthened with some recent effective appointments. Middle leaders are developing their areas of responsibility, but there has not been enough time for these new strategies to embed and have full impact.
- The overwhelming majority of staff who completed the online questionnaire are proud to work at the school. They say that leaders place a strong emphasis on their well-being. Staff welcome the increased opportunities for their professional development. Newly qualified teachers are very positive about the support and training that they receive.
- Leaders have improved systems for tracking pupils' progress. This allows leaders and teachers to act quickly and put intervention strategies in place so that pupils can catch up.
- A pupil premium review was commissioned following the last inspection which enabled leaders to identify the barriers facing disadvantaged pupils. Leaders were able to show examples of the positive impact of particular intervention strategies such as new resources to boost pupils' progress in English. Disadvantaged pupils are now beginning to do better. Leaders are aware that more needs to be done to ensure that these pupils make even better progress.
- The funding for pupils with SEND is not used sufficiently well. It has a positive impact for some pupils, but not for all. Leaders make good use of a wide range of external expertise. They have introduced a range of new strategies but it is too soon to

evaluate their effectiveness.

- Leaders review the curriculum regularly to ensure that it supports pupils in making better progress. For example, in key stage 4, pupils have access to a good balance of academic or vocational courses that best meet their needs and abilities. Pupils benefit from a range of extra-curricular activities such as inter-house competitions, trips abroad and sports clubs. They are also involved in charity work and enjoy participating in music and drama activities.
- The school's Catholic ethos lies at the core of school life. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Leaders provide a range of opportunities for pupils to learn about different faiths and include visits to places of worship. Pupils take part in Holocaust Memorial Week activities. They develop an understanding of democracy through a range of activities, including the election of school councillors.
- Leaders make effective use of the Year 7 catch-up funding. There has been some improvement in these pupils' skills in English and mathematics as a result. For example, Year 7 pupils read fluently to inspectors.
- The local authority has brokered effective external support from a teaching school to provide support and challenge for leaders and access to additional training for staff. This partnership is helping to improve the quality of education in the school.

Governance of the school

- Governance has improved. Following the last inspection, a review of governance led to changes in the structure and nature of committees. New members, including a new chair, bring a wide range of knowledge and experience to their roles. Governors now have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Minutes of meetings show that governors ask challenging questions of leaders which are leading to improvements. Governors are ambitious for the school. They are aware that there is still more work to do to improve the school.
- Governors have worked successfully with senior leaders in reducing a budget deficit. Similarly their work to publicise the school has resulted in the number of students coming to the sixth form increasing.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe at the school. They are confident that there are adults that they can talk to if they have any concerns. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet and social media platforms.
- Safeguarding records are accurate and thorough. The single central record is up to date and there are appropriate checks to ensure that pupils at the school are protected.
- All staff have completed training in safeguarding. Staff are aware of the signs of abuse. They know what to do if they have any concern about a pupil's welfare or safety. Leaders work well with a range of external agencies to protect any pupil who might be

at risk. Referrals are made effectively and in a timely manner.

- The safeguarding governor meets regularly with senior leaders and checks a range of safeguarding practices.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across different subjects and key stages.
- Since the beginning of the current school year, there has been more stability in staffing. The quality of teaching is beginning to improve, with evident improvements in the progress of current pupils.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve, particularly pupils with high prior attainment. The consequent lack of challenge prevents some pupils, particularly the most able, from making good progress.
- The quality of teachers' lesson planning is variable. Some teachers do not make good enough use of assessment information to meet the needs and abilities of pupils. As a result, some pupils lose focus in their work because the work is too difficult or too easy.
- Most teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to provide clear explanations. Where learning is effective, teachers use questioning well to probe pupils' thinking. For example, in a media studies lesson, pupils' understanding was extended through skilful questioning. This allowed pupils to complete their work in more detail.
- Pupils say that teachers set homework. They enjoy completing online revision tools.
- Most teachers follow the school's marking and assessment policy consistently.
- Teachers are given useful advice about helping pupils with SEND to learn. However, the quality of support that these pupils receive in lessons varies too much so that pupils do not always make the progress they could.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Leaders have improved the systems to record and follow up incidents of bullying. The vast majority of pupils are confident that bullying is dealt with effectively. However, a small number of pupils and parents are not satisfied with how leaders deal with bullying. Leaders have accepted this and are working to sharpen up procedures even further.
- Pupils speak positively about the vertical house tutoring system that leaders have introduced recently. Pupils say that it enables older pupils to look after younger ones.
- The personal, social, health and economic education programme helps to develop pupils' well-being. Pupils understand how to be safe from potential risks, including from those that can arise from using drugs and alcohol. Pupils develop a better

understanding of equality and diversity through a range of activities, such as Women's Rights Week.

- Pupils have opportunities to take responsibility and develop their leadership skills, such as being school prefects.
- Careers information, advice and guidance is effective. Pupils told inspectors that they have access to external careers advisors and coaches.
- A small proportion of pupils work with alternative providers away from the school site. Leaders ensure that these pupils are safe, well cared for and attend regularly.
- Pupils respect their school environment. The site is free from litter and graffiti.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons. Where expectations are high, pupils are keen to do well and show positive attitudes to learning. However, low-level disruption does occur in a small number of lessons and hinders pupils' learning. This usually happens when teaching does not engage pupils' interests.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is generally good. However, a small minority of pupils are boisterous during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Leaders have introduced two new internal inclusion rooms and a new rewards system. These strategies are helping to improve behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons. Records show that the number of fixed-term exclusions is reducing over time. However, leaders acknowledge that further work is needed in this area.
- Pupils' attendance has improved as a result of leaders and the family support worker liaising closely with families. Pupils receive a range of rewards for good attendance. As a result, attendance is now in line with the national average. However, leaders do not routinely analyse the attendance patterns of different groups of pupils. Consequently, leaders are not able to analyse patterns in attendance for different groups well enough.
- Most pupils are punctual to lessons and bring the right equipment to be ready to learn.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is not good because it varies too much between subjects and year groups.
- Published outcomes for 2017 show that Year 11 pupils' progress in mathematics was broadly average. However, progress across a range of other subjects, including English, was below the national average. Provisional results for 2018 show that Year 11 pupils did not make good progress. Pupils had too many gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding as a result of a legacy of weaker teaching and disrupted learning due to changes in staffing. However, inspection evidence shows that pupils currently in the school, particularly in key stage 3, are making better progress as a result of improvements in teaching.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils in 2017 was weaker than for other pupils

nationally. The provisional GCSE results in 2018 show that disadvantaged pupils' attainment and progress improved slightly. Assessment information and work in books demonstrate that disadvantaged pupils are beginning to catch up with other pupils due to more focused support.

- The most able pupils do not make enough progress. A review of pupils' work showed that progress for the most able pupils is improving but remains too variable.
- The progress made by pupils with SEND is inconsistent. Leaders have recently implemented ways to meet these pupils' needs more effectively but it is too early to see any impact on outcomes.
- Pupils who enter the school with weak literacy and numeracy skills now catch up more quickly than they used to.
- A small number of pupils access alternative provision and in many cases this has helped to improve their attendance and access courses that meet their needs.
- Pupils are being well prepared for their next steps in education. Nearly all pupils secure appropriate places in education, training or employment by the time they leave school.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is variable. Students do not make consistently good progress across a range of subjects.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. However, some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what students can achieve. Consequently, some students do not complete work that challenges them to make strong progress.
- In 2018, the first cohort of students following a range of academic courses did not do well. By contrast, students did better on vocational courses. In 2017 and 2018, overall progress on vocational courses was broadly average.
- Current assessment information and a review of students' work indicate that outcomes in academic and vocational subjects are improving.
- Leaders do not monitor and evaluate the quality of provision in the sixth form well enough. Leaders understand the need for improvements and are beginning to take effective action to bring about change.
- The sixth-form centre provides a welcoming and attractive environment in which to study.
- Students in the sixth form behave very well. They are polite and friendly. Students value the support and encouragement that they receive from their teachers to improve their learning. Students enjoy acting as reading mentors for younger pupils. This enables students to grow in confidence.
- Leaders have ensured that the principles and requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes are met. All students receive the opportunity to undertake work experience. This provides them with a useful insight into the world of work.
- Students who resit GCSE mathematics and English in the sixth form are well supported to make good progress towards achieving a pass grade.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Students feel safe. They say that bullying in the sixth form is extremely rare.
- Students receive impartial careers advice and guidance that prepares them well for their next steps.

School details

Unique reference number	105989
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	10053594

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1121
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Whitehead
Headteacher	Ben Davis
Telephone number	0161 921 1570
Website	www.stambrosebarlowswinton.org
Email address	office@ambrose.salford.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 October 2016

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average secondary school with sixth-form provision.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much lower than the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is broadly average.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative education provision either full-time or part-

time at the following providers: Carrington, CSIN, Salford Open Learning and the New Broadwalk Pupil Referral Unit.

- The local authority has brokered external support from a teaching school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning across the school in a wide range of subjects. Some of these were joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors observed pupils' conduct at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of pupils' work in different subjects throughout the inspection to evaluate pupils' learning over time.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils formally and spoke with many more pupils informally around the site at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, groups of middle leaders, teachers and members of the governing body including the chair. The lead inspector also met with a representative of the local authority, teaching school and the school improvement advisor.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including: records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, safeguarding information, minutes of governing body meetings, information on the progress made by pupils, training arrangements for teachers and other staff, checks on the quality of teaching, records of external support visits, the school's self-evaluation and the improvement plan.
- Inspectors took account of the views of 48 staff and 185 pupils through Ofsted's online questionnaires. Inspectors also considered the views of parents, taking into account 107 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 102 comments by free-text.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
David Woodhouse	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Hollister	Ofsted Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Ofsted Inspector

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