

The Barlow RC High School and Specialist Science College

Parrs Wood Road, East Didsbury, Manchester M20 6BX

Inspection dates

19 to 20 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders were determined to overcome the shortcomings identified at the previous inspection. They have secured the improvements required and provide a good quality of education at the school.
- Senior leadership is a strength of the school, providing the ambition and capacity to further strengthen the quality of education.
- Leaders know the school well. They meticulously and effectively plan, review and refine actions to improve the school.
- Governance is effective. Governors take their responsibilities seriously. They challenge and support senior leaders to improve the school.
- Leaders, including governors, promote positive values clearly and consistently. They set and support a culture where pupils are aspirational, considerate of others and hard working.
- Leaders' plan an effective curriculum for pupils. Pupils study courses which meet their needs.
- Senior leaders' appointment of a school improvement partner has supported the development of subject leadership, which is now consistently effective.
- Teaching is effective. The weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics and science, which were seen at the previous inspection, have been rectified.
- Teaching is especially strong in English, geography, history, French and Spanish. Pupils routinely think deeply and apply their learning creatively in these subjects. Despite effective teaching, these strengths are less evident elsewhere.
- Pupils' outcomes are good. They make good progress during their time at the school and successfully move on to next steps.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported effectively.
- The management of the additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils is effective. These pupils make good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are courteous, happy and confident. Pupils' conduct around school and attitudes to learning are positive.
- Pupils' attendance is good overall. There is scope for leaders to improve the attendance of a minority of disadvantaged pupils, and those with SEND, who have weaker attendance.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Pupils understand and value differences.
- A strong culture of safeguarding exists throughout the school. Pupils say staff know them and care about their well-being.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to strengthen teaching so pupils more regularly think deeply and apply their learning creatively.
- Further improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders have taken effective action to overcome the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. They were quick to dismantle the barriers which had previously hindered pupils' success, and have been determined to strengthen the quality of education provided since. The improvement is clear to see. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now good overall, helping pupils make strong progress.
- Leadership has improved since the last inspection and is now consistently good. The headteacher and deputy headteachers provide especially strong leadership. They have instilled a culture of high standards, reflection and ambition among staff, which underpins the school's improvement. They are not complacent nor satisfied with the improvements made to date, but they are ambitious to further strengthen pupils' education and life chances.
- Leaders at all levels know the school well. They are clear of what works well and where there are any areas requiring further attention. The limited effectiveness of some leaders in contributing to school improvement, which was noted at the previous inspection, has been overcome.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is good and, as a result, leaders have secured good-quality teaching. This includes in mathematics and science, where teaching was too weak at the time of the previous inspection.
- Leaders accurately understand the strengths of teaching across the school and any aspects which require further development. As a result, training is well planned and implemented. Teachers say the training programme, which leaders have introduced, is effective because they are provided with the time and expertise to improve their skills. It supports effectively the newly and recently qualified staff, and has also resulted in stronger teaching from established staff. The progress pupils make has improved since the previous inspection and is now consistently good.
- Subject leadership is effective, including in mathematics and science. Senior leaders provide training and additional support to ensure this level of leadership is consistently effective. This includes the support of the school improvement partner, who has been appointed since the previous inspection, and has had a significantly positive impact on this aspect of leadership. Subject leaders consistently and accurately monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make in their subject. Leaders quickly spot where changes are required to improve learning, and they put actions in place to strengthen teaching.
- Senior leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively. Leaders took seriously the recommendation of the previous inspection, to undertake an external review to improve this aspect of leadership. In addition, they have undertaken a second such review, to establish the extent of improvements made and to secure expert guidance on next steps. Senior leaders' actions have helped ensure disadvantaged pupils' good progress. These pupils benefit from their positive engagement in learning, effective teaching and, for most of them, strong attendance.

- The use of the funding provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has improved since the previous inspection and is now effective. Leaders ensure that teachers know pupils with SEND well, including those who require an education, health and care plan (EHCP). A small number of parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, had individual concerns about aspects of the care, welfare and education for their children. However, inspectors' evidence showed that, overall, the well-being, health and learning of pupils with SEND are good.
- The actions taken to support pupils with below average attainment in literacy and numeracy to catch up by the end of Year 7 are effective.
- Leaders are well informed about the curriculum. They routinely review the courses, opportunities and knowledge with which pupils are provided. Leaders currently have a sharp focus on reviewing and refining the key stage 3 curriculum. Current pupils, in key stage 3 and key stage 4, are provided with courses and learning experiences which enable them to succeed. Leaders are aware that the pupils currently in Year 7 have moved up from more than 40 primary schools. They have taken care to ensure that the Year 7 curriculum takes account of and builds on the pupils' varied primary school experience and prior learning.
- In key stages 3 and 4 the curriculum promotes well pupils' academic, artistic, sporting and technological knowledge and understanding. Leaders have recently broadened the GCSE option choices available to pupils at key stage 4. For example, they have introduced GCSE photography in response to pupils' interests. Far more pupils follow the English Baccalaureate suite of academic qualifications at key stage 4 than was previously the case. This range of academic courses better meets these pupils' needs.
- Leaders plan and provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs for pupils. These are popular because they match pupils' wider academic, cultural, artistic and sporting interests. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND participate equally in the activities provided.
- The careers guidance programme is well led and managed. Pupils receive high-quality information, including independent advice, throughout key stages 3 and 4. In 2018, almost all pupils moved on to aspirational next steps in education, training or employment.

Governance of the school

- Governance is good. Governors have made a telling contribution to the improved quality of education provided at the school since the last inspection. Governors take their responsibilities seriously and are equipped to fulfil them effectively. They bring a balance of relevant educational, financial, personnel and business skills, which enabled them to provide challenge and support to leaders. Governors have an accurate picture of the school's current strengths and priorities for further development.
- Governors set and promote the school's key values. They are based in the school's Christian ethos and an unswerving focus on the care of and high aspiration for every pupil. Governors take the time to check that these values are understood and

consistently upheld by leaders and staff at the school. Governors' determination that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND benefit from a good education has helped to improve these pupils' life chances since the previous inspection.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders maintain effective safeguarding records. They have systematic procedures for checking the backgrounds of staff when they are appointed.
- Leaders are aware of the risk pupils face, including outside school. Staff are suitably trained in identifying potential risks to pupils. This includes risks of drug and gang-related crime, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation.
- Staff recognise their responsibility to support an effective culture of safeguarding. They know pupils well, so provide effectively for their safety and well-being.
- School leaders' work with external agencies and parents is effective. Leaders act swiftly, when required, to contact and work with a range of external agencies to secure pupils' safety and well-being.
- Pupils understand the risks which might affect them and how to keep safe, including when online and using mobile devices.
- Pupils know to whom they should report concerns and how to do this.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders' actions since the previous inspection have significantly improved the quality of teaching, especially in mathematics and science. Senior leaders' determination to secure consistently effective teaching in these subjects has resulted in pupils' good progress.
- Teachers use consistently the assessment information available about pupils' learning to set work which matches pupils' needs and abilities. The progress of current pupils of all abilities and across subjects and year groups is at least good. Teaching is especially strong in English, geography, history, French and Spanish. In these subjects, teachers use their good subject knowledge to consistently engage pupils in challenging and interesting activities. As a result, these pupils are confident to think creatively and equipped to grapple with and grasp complex ideas.
- However, despite the overall effective quality of teaching, there are occasions in other subjects when pupils are set tasks which do not challenge or inspire them to think deeply and creatively. In these cases, pupils do not excel in their learning as seen in other subjects.
- Teachers effectively develop pupils' literacy skills across all subjects. Pupils of all abilities, including disadvantaged pupils, regularly practise and strengthen their skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. They read and learn from the challenging texts provided across a range of subjects and enjoy reading the books they borrow from the school or bring from home. Pupils speak confidently and with detail and imagination when given the time to think about and respond to questions that are asked by

teachers. This strength is especially evident in English, French, geography and history and has resulted in higher levels of accuracy, confidence and fluency in pupils' work.

- Teachers support pupils' high standards and good attitudes to learning. Pupils are highly motivated and typically learn with great enthusiasm. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work showed that they complete the activities set and do so with care and precision. Pupils take the time to consider and act on the teacher's assessment and feedback of their work, across all subjects. As a result, they overcome misconceptions and learn well.
- Pupils with SEND are taught effectively. Teachers take account of the information they are provided with to help them plan activities which fully support and challenge these pupils in lessons. Where pupils occasionally require additional support out of lessons, this is managed and taught well.
- Pupils say that they take the time to complete homework fully and thoughtfully because it is well planned and managed. It provides pupils with time to learn and think about topics which interest them and supports them in strengthening any weaknesses in the subject knowledge or understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident, courteous and cheerful. They have high expectations of their futures.
- Pupils wear their uniform correctly and with pride.
- Pupils respect their teachers and one another. Their positive relationships with staff support their personal development. In the few instances where pupils' good habits slip, staff are swift to spot this and support pupils to restore their typically good standards.
- Pupils say bullying is rare, and staff deal with any incidents effectively. This includes racist and homophobic bullying. Pupils value people's differences, as well as other faiths and cultures. Inspectors checked records of bullying, which show that any incidents of bullying are followed up and resolved effectively.
- Pupils say staff are considerate of their emotional and physical well-being. The support services provided by leaders are wide ranging and meet pupils' requirements.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is securely embedded in the school's curriculum. Pupils meaningfully explore topical and more deep-rooted spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects during 'family time' at the start of each day and in lessons. Leaders' planning, monitoring and refinement of this aspect of the curriculum help to secure pupils' mature approach to relationships, their responsibilities and role in modern Britain.
- Leaders manage effectively the attendance, behaviour and safeguarding of pupils who attend alternative provision.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. They listen to teachers and one another and take pride in their work.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is good. They move around the school with care and consideration for others at breaktime, lunchtime and at the change of lessons. Pupils are punctual to lessons.
- Pupils treat the school environment with respect. There are no signs of graffiti and pupils do not leave litter lying around.
- Pupils' attendance is in line with the national average overall. The sharpened focus of leaders to support the good attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is having a positive impact. Most of these pupils attend school more regularly than in the past. However, despite improvement, the attendance of a minority of these pupils does not match that of others nationally.
- Leaders monitor and manage effectively the attendance, behaviour and safeguarding of pupils who attend alternative provision.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, the outcomes of the GCSE examinations indicated that pupils made progress broadly in line with pupils across the country who had achieved similar scores at the end of Year 6. Pupils made much better progress than others nationally in French, Spanish, geography and history. Their progress in English was just above others nationally. In mathematics, pupils' progress continued its improving trend of previous years and was moving towards average.
- Evidence from pupils' work shows the current picture is even more positive. This is because the improvements in teaching since the previous inspection have gathered momentum across the school. Teaching is effective across subjects and key stages and continues to improve. Most pupils now achieve standards in line with their capabilities.
- Pupils currently in Year 11 have similar prior attainment to that of last year's Year 11. A recent series of externally moderated full mock-examinations indicated that in all subjects, including mathematics and science, results were significantly better than for those who took GCSEs in the summer of 2018.
- Pupils of all abilities, including the most able pupils, make good progress. They make strongest progress in those subjects where they regularly think deeply about their learning and creatively apply it.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved markedly since the previous inspection. Currently, the work of disadvantaged pupils shows their progress is good across subjects and year groups.
- Previously, disadvantaged pupil's next steps in education had been hampered by a requirement to resit GCSE examinations in one or both subjects in the sixth form they move on to after leaving this school. This was due to weak examination grades at the

end of Year 11. Leaders have taken effective action to overcome this.

- Pupils with SEND make better progress from their varying starting points than other pupils with SEND in previous years. The effective leadership of the provision for pupils with SEND is aiding this. Leaders and teachers now have a sharper understanding of these pupils' needs and how best to support and challenge them. The current work of pupils with SEND shows that they make good progress.
- Leaders check effectively on the quality of education for pupils who attend alternative provision. Leaders ensure that these pupils benefit from an appropriate curriculum which prepares them effectively for the next stage of their education.
- A high proportion of pupils move on to and stay in the courses of their choice, which provide next steps in education and training after leaving the school.

School details

Unique reference number	105581
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10057919

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 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	867
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marion Meakin
Headteacher	Claire McCarron
Telephone number	0161 445 8053
Website	www.thebarlowrhigh.co.uk
Email address	admin@thebarlowrhigh.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 November to 1 December 2016

Information about this school

- The Barlow RC High School and Specialist Science College is an average-sized secondary school.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Salford.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.
- The school uses two alternative providers for a small number of pupils. These are Manchester Secondary Pupil Referral Unit and Manchester Hospital School.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings took place with school leaders, teachers, governors, and a group of parents. Telephone conversations took place with the school improvement partner and a representative of the Diocese of Salford.
- Discussions were held with pupils to gather their views on a variety of issues, including safeguarding, bullying, behaviour, teaching and the curriculum.
- Inspectors examined a range of the school’s documentation, such as the self-evaluation and improvement plan, assessment information, the pupil premium plan, attendance, bullying and behaviour records and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of 77 staff survey responses, 53 responses to the pupils’ survey, 78 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and 27 written responses from parents to Ofsted’s free-text facility.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school and scrutinised pupils’ work in a range of subjects and year groups. They were accompanied by school leaders on some of these observations.

Inspection team

Stephen Ruddy, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Kath Harris	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Pennington	Ofsted Inspector
Dawn Farrent	Ofsted Inspector

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