

Inspection of St Ambrose Barlow Catholic Primary School

Manchester Road, Astley, Tyldesley, Manchester M29 7DY

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 September 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 12 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at St Ambrose Barlow Catholic Primary School. They feel safe and well cared for.

Pupils make friends easily. Children in the early years settle quickly into school routines and develop confidence. Older pupils successfully use their talents and interests to make a tangible contribution to their school and the wider community.

Pupils enjoy playtimes. For example, they cooperate well together in high-quality physical activities. They also take part enthusiastically in the wide range of experiences on offer at school, such as sport or learning in the outdoor area.

Pupils learn how important positive behaviour is. Typically, they behave well and focus intently on their learning. Pupils benefit from additional support, if they need it, to access all aspects of school life. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This helps pupils to experience success at school.

The school has high expectations of all pupils' achievement. Children learn how to meet these expectations while they are in the Reception Year. Across the school, staff support pupils to be ready to learn. Pupils achieve well.

Pupils learn to embrace diversity. They demonstrate courtesy and respect towards others. Pupils explained to inspectors how people's differences make the world a more interesting place.

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

The school's published data from national tests has been very strong over time. Despite this, the school has not been complacent. It has developed a new curriculum, which has broadened and enriched pupils' knowledge across a wider range of subjects. Pupils continue to achieve well in national tests, as well as learning more broadly across the curriculum.

The school's revised curriculum supports pupils to build a rich body of knowledge over time. Pupils benefit from opportunities to recall what they have learned previously. This helps them to understand new learning. Pupils' recall of the wider range of essential knowledge that the school wants them to learn is improving.

Typically, in most subjects, teachers regularly check that pupils have grasped new learning before moving on to something new. However, in a few other subjects, the school's assessment systems are underdeveloped. On occasion, they do not provide teachers with all the information that they need to check whether pupils have remembered curriculum content. From time to time, this hinders how well teachers identify whether pupils have gaps in their knowledge or if they have developed misconceptions.

Reading is a strength of the school. In recent years, the school has introduced a new phonics programme to address gaps in some pupils' reading knowledge following the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff are suitably trained to deliver this programme consistently well. Children start to learn how to use phonics to read words as soon as they begin in the Reception Year. Most pupils develop secure reading knowledge by the time that they complete key stage 1.

Pupils across the school enjoy reading the wide range of high-quality texts that the school provides. This helps pupils to access the rest of the curriculum more easily. Expert staff provide effective support for those older pupils who require additional support to catch up with their reading knowledge.

In the main, teachers provide appropriate support to enable pupils in their class to access the curriculum fully. This includes pupils with SEND. However, there is variability in the school's knowledge of different types of SEND and how to identify these. For example, some teachers are not sure about how best to support pupils with more complex SEND. Added to this, the systems in place to record and share important information about pupils' additional needs are not used consistently well by staff. Some pupils with SEND struggle to access aspects of the curriculum as a result.

Pupils are well motivated to earn the rewards on offer for positive behaviour and trying their best. As pupils progress through the school, they become adept at remaining focused on their learning during lesson time.

Pupils benefit from the school's strong focus on wider personal development. They develop a secure understanding of the importance of nutrition, mental well-being and physical fitness in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. They know what constitutes a safe and healthy relationship. Consequently, pupils' learning across the curriculum prepares them well for later life.

Leaders and governors work closely together with staff, parents and carers. For example, the school ensures that parents are well informed about how they can support their children's learning.

Staff appreciate the school's consideration of their workload and well-being. For instance, the school checks that any changes or improvements made to the curriculum do not create additional workload for staff.

Governors provide effective support and challenge to the school. They are committed to supporting the school in providing a high-quality education for all pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not know how to identify and meet the range of needs of some pupils with SEND consistently well. This means that, at times, some pupils with complex additional needs struggle to access the curriculum as well as their peers. The school should ensure that teachers are well equipped to identify the full range of pupils' additional needs. This is so that they can provide effective support for pupils with different types of SEND.
- In a few subjects, the school's assessment systems are underdeveloped. This sometimes hampers teachers from identifying pupils' misconceptions and gaps in knowledge quickly enough. The school should ensure that assessment systems in these remaining subjects support teachers to check how well pupils have learned the knowledge in the curriculum.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	106510
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	10289909
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Caroline Lowe
Headteacher	Gareth Doherty
Website	www.saintambrosebarlow.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	27 and 28 September 2011, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in October 2016. The next section 48 inspection is due by the end of 2024.
- The current headteacher is the second headteacher to be appointed since the previous inspection.
- A new chair of governors has also been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school. An inspector also spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the diocese and a representative of the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff, and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, geography and physical education. They spoke with the leaders of these areas of the curriculum. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors also spoke with leaders and pupils about learning in other areas of the curriculum.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school. An inspector scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour.
- An inspector visited the school's breakfast club.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including the free-text responses.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Elliot Costas-Walker

Ofsted Inspector

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