

Inspection of St Ambrose Barlow RC High School

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

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 February 2024

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel valued, cared for and happy at this welcoming school. They spoke warmly of their positive relationships with staff. Pupils feel that they matter to their teachers.

Pupils and staff are proud of the ways in which their school has improved in recent years. The school expects all pupils to achieve well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils develop their knowledge well over time. They receive appropriate help and support. This is because staff understand and recognise individual pupils' needs.

Pupils are rewarded for their positive behaviour, effort and achievement. Pupils typically behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils feel safe in this school.

Pupils are encouraged to follow the school's stated mission to 'love, learn and lead'. They develop respect for the opinions and beliefs of others. This learning helps everyone to feel included in the school, regardless of difference. Pupils develop a keen understanding of healthy relationships. They benefit from a wide range of clubs, activities and leadership opportunities. For example, pupils can become school councillors or prefects or lead activities, such as those during Black History Month.

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

The school provides a broad and ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision). Across all subjects, the school has identified the most important knowledge that it wants pupils to learn and when this should be taught. This helps pupils to build up their learning over time.

Improvements in the curriculum offer mean that more pupils are choosing to study a language in key stage 4. As a result, the proportion of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects is increasing towards the government's ambition.

Teachers present new information clearly. In most subjects, they check pupils' understanding and quickly address any misconceptions. This helps pupils in these subjects to build securely on their prior knowledge. However, in some other subjects, teachers' strategies for identifying missing knowledge are less effective. Older pupils, who experienced a weaker curriculum in the past, have gaps in their learning that have not been identified or addressed. This means that some pupils in key stage 4 do not learn and remember the curriculum in these subjects as well as they should.

Pupils who sat their GCSEs in 2023 did not attain as well as their peers nationally. However, these examination results do not reflect the progress of current pupils through the curriculum. Most pupils, including those in the specially resourced provision, learn well.

The school makes use of effective procedures to identify any pupils who may have SEND. Their needs are assessed thoroughly. Staff are well trained in how to meet these needs in lessons. Pupils with SEND receive the help that they need to learn well.

The school has made reading a priority. Pupils enjoy reading in form time and during library lessons. The school carefully identifies those who need additional help to read well. Support from well-trained staff enables these pupils to catch up quickly with their peers.

Most pupils meet the school's high expectations of their behaviour. Staff deal with any incidents of poor behaviour quickly and effectively. However, a small minority of pupils persist in misbehaving when they are not closely supervised.

The school has a comprehensive approach to ensuring that pupils come to school regularly. Staff work closely with pupils and their families when attendance needs to improve. As a result, pupils, including those with SEND and those in the specially resourced provision, attend school regularly.

The school promotes pupils' personal development extremely well. Pupils learn about democracy and benefit from many opportunities to debate important issues. Pupils are taught about the value of diversity. The school ensures that pupils receive high-quality information and impartial advice about careers. All pupils in Year 10 benefit from work experience. Pupils are very well prepared for life beyond school.

The school ensures that pupils get the most that they can out of the wealth of extra-curricular clubs on offer. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, build their confidence and develop new interests as they try out new clubs and sporting activities.

The school is well led. Governors have a deep understanding of the school. They provide appropriate challenge and support. The school has invested in staff's professional development. It also encourages them to collaborate when designing learning activities, which has helped teachers to manage their workload. This approach, among others, creates an environment which is supportive of staff's well-being. As a result, staff feel valued and are proud to work at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school's strategies to identify and then address gaps in pupils' knowledge are less effective than in other curriculum areas. As a result, some key stage 4 pupils have misconceptions. This makes it difficult for them to

build on what they know. The school should ensure that teachers use assessment strategies consistently well to address the learning gaps that pupils may have.

- A small group of pupils do not meet the school's expectations of their behaviour around the school. On occasions, this undermines the positive and respectful culture that the school has established. The school should ensure that these pupils are supported to develop positive attitudes and appropriate self-control.

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	105989
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	10321294
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	1,087
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Vikki Allen
Headteacher	Ben Davis
Website	www.stambrosebarlowswinton.org
Dates of previous inspection	9 and 10 March 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- This Catholic school is part of the Diocese of Salford. Its most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character took place in March 2019. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before March 2027.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for up to 25 pupils on behalf of the local authority. These pupils all have a diagnosis of autism. At the time of the inspection, six pupils were attending this provision.
- The school makes use of three unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She also spoke to representatives of the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, geography, information and communication technology and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school and their views of behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation document, leaders' improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Stephanie Gill, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Michael Gun-Why	Ofsted Inspector
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