

Inspection of Barlaston C of E (VC) First School

Barlaston C of E (VC) First School, Broughton Crescent, Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent,
Staffordshire ST12 9DB

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 May 2024

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 Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel happy and safe in this small, friendly school. They flourish because of the school's high expectations and the support they get from staff. Pupils believe in themselves, have positive attitudes, and have good relationships with each other, reflecting the school values of 'family, friendship and faith'. Parents and carers are happy with the school. Nearly all would recommend it to others.

Pupils behave well. They are confident and articulate. They take pride in their work and in helping others. They say that 'school is like being in a family'. They treat each other well and usually resolve any disagreements without fuss.

The school has an ambitious vision for its pupils. Staff share a mission that all pupils should 'let their light shine'. They have worked hard to improve the quality of education since the last inspection. A new curriculum is in place, which is mostly being taught well. Staff support pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), well. Effective work with outside agencies further supports vulnerable pupils.

A rich variety of experiences promotes children and pupils' wider development. These include community activities, worship assemblies, a forest school, clubs and trips.

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

The school has established an ambitious curriculum for pupils across all curriculum subjects. It defines the key knowledge that pupils should learn each year, including for pupils with SEND.

The school introduced a new approach to teaching early reading last year, which is now well established across the school. It includes regular training for all staff. This ensures that early reading is taught expertly and pupils learn to read quickly. Any pupils who fall behind catch up rapidly because of the extra help they get. A small number of pupils who did not meet the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1 now read with confidence and fluency. In the Nursery and Reception classes, expert teaching helps children make good progress with communication and language skills.

A new approach to teaching writing began this year. It is helping younger pupils to improve their handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation. However, many older pupils still make too many mistakes when writing that are not picked up by teachers.

In mathematics, staff emphasise the correct usage of mathematical vocabulary. Thorough subject knowledge helps staff explain new concepts well. Practical activities engage all pupils in lively learning and provide practice in applying knowledge. Children in Reception explain their reasoning confidently when solving problems. This all helps pupils to make good progress in mathematics.

Across a range of curriculum subjects, staff present subject matter clearly. Their subject knowledge usually helps them make effective teaching choices, which ensures that pupils learn successfully across subjects. Effective curriculum adaptations help pupils with SEND learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

The school is striving to further develop the learning experiences for pupils, particularly in foundation subjects. However, subject leaders do not have a firm view of how foundation subjects, and their teaching, could be improved. This is because they have not yet checked on how well the subjects are being taught.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Staff provide guidance on how to behave in different circumstances. Routines are very well established, including for sitting, listening, moving, speaking and writing. A few pupils occasionally lose focus, or need settling, but this is managed adeptly by staff. In the early years, children are taught and practise the routines. They listen attentively and concentrate closely during the different activities they do. More widely, children in the early years settle in quickly. Well-organised activities help them to learn all areas of the curriculum. This prepares them for the next stage of education well.

Pupils attend school regularly. The school works closely with parents and carers of pupils whose attendance is irregular. As a result, attendance in the school is higher than the average for all primary schools.

Pupils learn about themselves through worship assemblies. These daily sessions remind everyone of the school's mission and its values, which bind the school together. Alongside this, well-established links with a local church provide pupils with a wider sense of belonging, faith and spirituality.

Pupils are active in school life as well as the local community. For example, they take on leadership roles within the school, host a 'feed the hungry' project, raise money for charities, build links with a Kenyan school and take part in a variety of musical performances. They enjoy the many trips, clubs and other activities available to them, including residential, theatre visits and sporting fixtures. All this, together with personal, social and health education lessons, provides ample opportunities for pupils' personal development.

Leaders take regular account of parents' views. They are supported carefully by an ambitious and capable governing body. The governing body carries out its duties effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Older pupils are not given enough guidance or reminders about how to write accurately. Therefore, they make too many punctuation, grammar, spelling and handwriting mistakes when writing in foundation subjects. The school should ensure that staff give older pupils the help and practice they need to write more accurately in foundation subjects.
- Subject leaders do not have enough understanding of how well the intended curriculum is being taught. As a result, they do not have a firm view of what is needed to improve foundation subjects further. The school should ensure that subject leaders review the teaching of foundation subjects, alongside the planned review of curriculum content, in order to establish any next steps needed to help pupils achieve further.

How can I feedback 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 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	124233
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10322779
Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gordon Taylor
Headteacher	John Gordon
Website	www.barlaston.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school is a voluntary-controlled Church of England school and last received a section 48 inspection in June 2022. The next inspection should take place before June 2027.

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.

- 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.
- 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 carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, English and music. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke to subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, talked to pupils about their learning and behaviour, and considered extensive samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons, assemblies and at social times. They spoke with groups of parents at the school gates.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, including those responsible for SEND, early years, the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and safeguarding.
- The lead inspector met with five members of the governing body, including its chair. The lead inspector also spoke by telephone with a local authority school improvement partner.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including written comments from parents, and responses to the Ofsted staff survey.

Inspection team

Mike Cladingbowl, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Plant	Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
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