



St Ambrose Barlow Catholic Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106510
LEA Wigan
Inspection number 277579
Inspection dates 7 March 2006 to 8 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr John Coleman HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Manchester Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Astley
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Tyldesley, Manchester M29 7DY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01942 883 912
Number on roll	207	Fax number	01942 776 498
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr S Cooper
Date of previous inspection	4 October 1999	Headteacher	Mr B Dorgan

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves the parish of St Ambrose Barlow though pupils are drawn from a wider area. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds and enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average. The vast majority of pupils are of white British background. Less than 13% of pupils have learning difficulties, which is lower than the national average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good standard of education with some outstanding features. The quality of education offered in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The school is particularly successful in creating an ethos built upon respect and consideration for others. Leadership and management are good. Committed leadership by the headteacher, the senior leadership team and the governors is securing good improvement. However, the school does not know how well some of its strategies for improvement are really working because it doesn't evaluate them sharply enough. All pupils, including those with additional learning needs make good progress. They reach above average standards, except in mathematics, where standards are well above average. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

Staff provide outstanding role models in their care for pupils and each other, and pupils are very happy coming to school. They enjoy their education. Their behaviour is exemplary. They are polite, courteous and they get on well with each other. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of what keeps them and others healthy and safe. The school works hard to develop their awareness. Provision for pupils' personal, social and emotional development is outstanding and promotes their independence very effectively.

Improvement since the last inspection is good. The school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and a good capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the expectations of what pupils should achieve in the Foundation Stage.
- Sharpen the way the school evaluates the success of its improvement plans.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress. The majority enter school with average skills, though their ability to work and play independently and their level of speaking skills are above average. They make satisfactory progress in the Reception class. By the end of Foundation Stage pupils' achievements are in line with those found nationally.

In Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress overall, so that by Year 2, standards are above average. Pupils with additional learning needs and those with the highest attainment also make good progress.

Good progress is made in Key Stage 2, so that by Year 6 standards are well above average in mathematics, and above average in English and science. The most able pupils make good progress in mathematics and science, but only satisfactory progress in English. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress. The school sets challenging targets and pupils achieve them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupil's personal development and well-being is outstanding. They develop responsibility, mature attitudes and the ability to make excellent relationships. The pupils rate their school highly and have very positive attitudes to learning. They greatly enjoy school and attendance is good. Pupils work hard for their teachers saying that they enjoy their lessons because teachers make learning fun and take care to ensure that they understand what they have to do. A typical comment from the pupils is, 'Teachers are pleasant, they are strict, but they always make sure you reach your highest potential.' Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary with pupils showing respect and consideration for others. They enthusiastically accept responsibility and are cheerful, polite and helpful. They are pleased that their views are listened to, for example, the sports council has been instrumental in improving resources for activities at lunchtime.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show a high level of confidence when answering questions in lessons and carry out their responsibilities well. They gain an awareness of other religions through assemblies, lessons and visits. Pupils give generously for charities and are helpful to visitors. They have a good awareness of how to live healthily and behave in a safe manner. Their positive attitudes and above average basic skills equip them well for future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 1 to 6. It is satisfactory in Reception, but expectations of what children should achieve are not high enough. Teachers use their detailed subject knowledge and of how well each pupil is attaining to plan lessons that build systematically on previous learning. Lessons are well organised, children know what they are to learn, the pace at which pupils learn is good, and close attention is given to developing basic skills. The effective use of interactive whiteboards engages and stimulates pupils. Teachers use questions well to encourage pupils to think hard and they encourage them to express their ideas. For example, in a literacy lesson with Year 5, the pupils responded very enthusiastically to questions about their feelings after listening to the teacher read a particularly moving and thought provoking text. They showed good moral awareness when examining issues from the story. Effective use of teaching assistants ensures that pupils with additional learning needs make good progress.

Assessment procedures are well organised and pupils' progress is very carefully monitored. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously and their comments help pupils to understand what they have done well and how they might improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets the needs of pupils well, including those with additional learning needs. The areas of learning for the Foundation Stage are covered satisfactorily. Throughout the school, good attention is given to developing pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved and pupils now have good opportunities to apply their ICT skills in other subjects. The arts are also given significant attention. For example, local artists recently worked with pupils and inspired them to develop paintings of good quality.

A wide range of extra curriculum activities, including a residential visit, is provided to make learning interesting. The use of visits and visitors enriches pupils' learning so that they really enjoy school. Provision for sport is good and pupils are encouraged to take regular exercise. Courses on safety, relationships and drug awareness encourage them to develop a safe and healthy life style.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are good. The school has a very positive ethos and staff work hard and successfully develop pupils' self esteem and confidence. Pupils feel safe in school, they like their teachers, and say they would confidently turn to them if they needed help. Parents feel welcome in school and are encouraged to become involved in their children's education. Child protection arrangements are in place and the school has very effective links with outside agencies. Procedures relating to health and safety are good. Close attention is given to ensuring that pupils settle quickly into school and arrangements for their transfer to secondary school are good.

Pupils' academic progress is tracked very thoroughly and target setting arrangements are well organised. Most pupils know their targets and what they need to do to improve. As one pupil said, 'Teachers mark your work carefully and make comments to help you understand how to improve.' Pupils who find learning difficult are given good support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Inspection confirms the school's view that leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and a clear direction, which is fully endorsed by governors and staff. Responses from parents show they overwhelmingly hold the school in high regard. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The school leadership team, including governors, have a good awareness of the strengths of the school and the areas in need of development. Nonetheless the lack of measurable criteria for determining success limits the school's capacity to know how well it is improving.

Subject leaders monitor pupil's performance through good assessment systems which are used well to inform the planning of future learning for pupils. Central to the school's vision is the inclusion of everyone, and pupils of all abilities make good progress overall.

The governors are well informed and knowledgeable about the school. They especially benefit from the outstanding information and analysis of pupil's performance from the headteacher. They successfully challenge the school's leadership where appropriate and provide effective support in their strategic role. Resources are well deployed and the recruitment and retention of staff are well managed. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. In particular, standards have risen significantly. Based upon the trend of rising standards and the success in resolving previous issues for improvement, the capacity for future improvement is good.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, we visited your school last week. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for being so helpful when we asked you questions. We enjoyed talking with you and finding out about the things you enjoy doing.

We think your school does many things well, and some of the things you learn are particularly exciting. We have found a few things which we think would make your learning even better. The things we particularly think are good are:

- everyone is very friendly and helpful and so your school is a happy place to be
- your teachers help you to do well in most lessons
- you said your teachers make most lessons interesting and enjoyable, and we agree
- when you are given jobs to do, you carry them out very sensibly
- the school cares for everyone and makes sure you are safe.

We would like you to work with your teachers to improve the way you learn:

- we want the tasks that teachers give you in Reception class to make you work really hard, particularly if you are good at something
- when your teachers try to improve what works well at your school, we want them to measure the effects of their actions by how much your work improves.

Thank you for helping us so much with the inspection of your school. We all hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make St Ambrose Barlow Catholic Primary School an even better place to be.